E. S. Whitman

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/newplaysfromjapa0000yoza

NEW PLAYS FROM JAPAN

Authorized Translations
BY
YOZAN T. IWASAKI
AND
GLENN HUGHES

With an Introduction by
GLENN HUGHES

GEORGE JOHNSON LIBRARY
Saint Peter's College
JERSEY CITY 6, N. J.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK
M C M X X X

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

895.6208
Iw92
FEB 8 1952

These plays are fully protected in all countries by the copyright law, all requirements of which have been complied with. No performance, professional or amateur, no public reading, nor any radio broadcast, may be given without permission of the publishers, D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 35 West 32nd St., New York, or D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 34 Bedford Street, Covent Garden, London, England.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
DEATH, BY TAKEO ARISHIMA	15
A FAMILY AFFAIR, BY SANEATSU MUSHAKOJI . . .	73
BURNING HER ALIVE, BY SENZABURO SUDZUKI . . .	109

23501

INTRODUCTION

As most students of drama are aware, the playwrights of modern Japan fall into two groups : those who maintain the native tradition by adapting and re-writing the old stage pieces, the doll-plays and *kabuki* plays ; and those who have succumbed to European fashions and ideas. It is a question whether the work of the first group demands translation into English. If one has read the ancient *Nō* plays, and specimens from the great popular dramatists, Chikamatsu and Takeda Izumo, one may quite well overlook the pseudo-classical playwrights of to-day. Regarding the second group, however, we must be more inquisitive, for in them we discover something really new and exciting. Not that their work is original, in the sense that its origins are unapparent—quite the reverse. It is interesting because of the obviousness of its origins, and because it is the sort of imitation which, being made in the midst of another and different civilisation, is exotic at the same time that it is familiar.

The turmoil born of the swift meeting of Eastern and Western cultures has immersed every phase of Japanese life, and the theatre has been in the very midst of the swirl. Tolstoy, Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg and O'Neill are the Western forces whose impact has been most strongly felt, and it is not hard to trace in the modern Japanese drama the technical methods as well as the social and moral philosophies of these men. The result of their influence has not always, of course, proved interesting. Sometimes the imitation has been stupidly slavish ; again it has resulted in mental and artistic muddles of a most lamentable sort. Here and there, however, emerges from the general chaos a play possessed of intellectual clarity and firm artistic purpose. The three plays which form the present volume, for example, while not pushed forward as masterpieces of dramatic writing, have, nonetheless, a sense of direction which makes them something more than experiments on foreign models. All three were written by thoughtful, idealistic men—somewhat naïve, perhaps, in the light of Western civilisation, but naïve in an admirable and not a ridiculous way. Two of these men are already dead, though neither would be old were he living to-day. One died of consumption ; the other hanged himself.

It would probably interest the reader to set down some of the main facts in the lives of all three.

Takeo Arishima.

In the *New York Times* of August 26th, 1923, appeared a half-page article devoted to the life and death of Takeo Arishima, referring to him as " probably the leading Japanese author of the day," and recounting the tragic circumstances of the previous June, when the bodies of Arishima and Mrs. Akiko Hatano were discovered by the caretaker in the dramatist's summer villa at Karuigawa. It was a plain case of *shinju*, or double love suicide, which for long was commonly practised in Japan, and which even now occurs frequently enough to provide opportunity for violent discussions of its morality. The Japanese press made much of this particular case, for both parties to the tragic pact were famous in the literary world. And there were those who defended them, for the chivalric code of old Japan still has its ardent followers. The chief note in both commendatory and adversely critical comments was surprise that two such avowed modernists should resort to so classical a solution of their dilemma.

Mr. Arishima was educated at the Peers' School, and at the Hokkaido Imperial University. Following his graduation from the latter institution, he spent some time in America, where he pursued his literary studies at Haverford College, near Philadelphia. While in the Occident he acquired a deep interest in social and political problems, and is said to have become an enthusiastic Socialist. On his return to Japan he became a professor at the Hokkaido Imperial University, where, we may assume, his beliefs and teachings caused considerable unrest. This assumption is based upon the patently biographical matter to be found in his play, *Death.*

His wife, the daughter of a nobleman and famous general, died, leaving him three children. This incident, of course, forms the basis of the aforementioned play, and unquestionably brought to the already unhappy man the most appalling grief. The night-

mare of his sorrow he wove into this fascinating drama, which, while derived to a certain extent from Strindberg, is after all a powerful and convincing presentation of original experience. I doubt if any other playwright (excepting Strindberg) has succeeded so well in recording dramatically the psychological phenomena of feverish dreams and the emotional crises involved in death. It may be mentioned at this point that the Japanese title of the play means, literally, " Before Death, Death, and After Death," thus defining clearly the scope of the dramatic action. We have taken the liberty of shortening the title to the central word.

In 1917 Mr. Arishima published his first novel, and during the next few years he did a great deal of writing and publishing—his stories, essays, and plays attaining an extraordinary circulation. He was devoted to Russian literature, and his favourite writer was Tolstoy. But his admiration for Tolstoy did not harmonize with the circumstances of his life, for he had inherited from his father a large section of land, approximately a thousand acres, in Hokkaido (Northern Japan), and his conscience reminded him, when his friends did not, that the income he received from the tenants of this property was, from a Christian-Socialist point of view, criminal money. After some years of perplexity he settled the problem in a truly Tolstoyan manner : he called a meeting of representatives from each of the seventy-odd households on his estate, and delivered them a speech, the gist of which was that in conformity with his principles he was renouncing his ownership in the land, and was offering it as a free gift to the tenants, who were to share equally in its products. He declared that private property ownership was a crime, and that he intended from that day henceforth to live on what he earned by writing.

This happened in 1921. The Tolstoyan might now, one would think, settle down to a life of comparative peace. But the fates dogged him. He fell in love, and with a married woman. Mrs. Hatano was a successful and influential magazine writer, supposedly happily married. She had lived with her husband for twelve years. She met Arishima. They could not resist each other. After desperate efforts to stay apart, they gave up the struggle and

took their own lives. In a letter to a friend, written shortly before the suicide, Mrs. Hatano explained that she could not possibly bring herself to leave her husband and marry Arishima. She could not " kill Hatano spiritually." Arishima evidently acted on the same principle of unselfish idealism. He offered to go and speak plainly with Hatano, but he was dissuaded from this by the wife.

In one of the letters which Arishima wrote and left beside his body, he said : " I have nothing to regret regarding my conduct, but am completely satisfied with it." Farther on in the same letter he writes with almost unbelievable composure : " It is past one o'clock at the villa, and it is raining heavily. We walked all the way up to this place through the rain, and are preparing for the end. The scene around us may be said to be severe or tragic, as you wish, but as a matter of fact we are just like two children playing together. I never dreamed until this moment that death is so powerless in the presence of love." Needless to say, Arishima was judged to have been in his right mind at the time of his self-imposed death.

Saneatsu Mushakoji.

The living member of the dramatists represented in this volume, Mr. Saneatsu Mushakoji, was born in 1885, the son of a nobleman. He attended the Peers' School, from which he was graduated at the age of twenty-one. He then spent one year studying literature at the Imperial University, Tokyo, where he came under the spell of European dramatists : Tolstoy, Ibsen and Maeterlinck. About this time he began writing plays, the first of which, *Wilderness*, was published in 1908, and the second, *A Family Affair*, in 1909. The latter Mushakoji considers his first " real play," the former seeming to him entirely too immature to count. Between 1908 and 1923 he composed seven novels, five books of essays, fifteen one-act plays, and nine long plays. About half of his plays have been acted in Japan.

It is rather a coincidence that two of the dramatists under discussion should have experimented with Utopia, yet such is the case,

for in 1918, three years earlier than Arishima's community-property venture, Mushakoji purchased a small piece of land (about twelve acres) near Tokyo, and christening it the New Village organised it along " ideal " lines. We translate some typical passages from his official statement of principles and rules :

" Our ideal is that everyone in the world has a right to live a natural life, and to attain self-enlightenment. In order to accomplish this, one must not do harm to others. One should live honestly, for the sake of one's own happiness and freedom, and should not destroy the happiness of others. One who seeks such a life, who believes in the possibility of such a life, and who exhorts others to lead such a life—such a one is a member of the New Village, and is our brother or sister.

" There are two classes of membership : the first consists of those who come and live under our principles, actually putting them into practice ; the second, of those who are not in a position to practise these principles, but who agree with them. The number of first-class members is limited, but anyone may become a second-class member.

" First-class members contribute all their money to the Village unconditionally. They are given one year in which to dispose of their previously-owned property. After a year's residence in the Village, one who stays on must turn over all his property to the Village, without reservation.

" First-class members are required to work voluntarily. Members have no right to command or direct each other. The work of the Village is decided by a general meeting of the members. A member may insist upon his own ideas so long as they are not opposed to the spirit of the Village.

" Second-class members shall do their utmost to spread the ideals of the Village, to support its work, and to further the realisation of its ideals by deed or moral support. They shall each contribute not less than one yen per month to the Village, unless doing so prove to be a definite hardship."

Not the most subtle of constitutional documents for the regulation of Utopia, perhaps, but fully as sincere as any of its prototypes.

Mr. Mushakoji has been remarkably persistent in his social-

labour programme, in spite of much criticism and considerable trouble. He has not turned the world topsy-turvy, but he has made a few acres tremble with shouts of freedom. One of his greatest handicaps has been the inevitable application of the principle of self-realisation to the problem of sex. His colony has been characterised as a " free-love nest," and he himself, doubtless with the noblest of motives, has left his wife and taken up with another woman. Without looking too closely into the affairs of the New Village, let us charitably hope that in spite of domestic felicities and infelicities, its first-class members have not forgotten that they are " required to work voluntarily."

Senzaburo Sudzuki.

The life of our third dramatist does not offer much in the way of sensation or amusement, though in it is a definite note of pathos. Senzaburo Sudzuki was born in 1893, at Tokyo. He had the ordinary grammar-school training, and later attended a business college. As a child he learned some English from a missionary. What higher education he acquired came from reading of his own volition. In fact, he refers to himself as being self-educated.

From the age of seventeen to the age of twenty his ambition was to be a poet, and during those years a number of his poems were published in magazines. Then his interest turned to the drama, and he began contributing dramatic reviews to various periodicals. For two years he served as regular dramatic reviewer for a Tokyo newspaper. At the same time he began writing plays of his own, the first of these being published in 1918. By 1923 he had composed sixteen plays, about half of which were of one act, the remainder of two or more acts. Several of his pieces were produced at the Imperial Theatre, Tokyo, and one or two at less important theatres.

Burning Her Alive was written in 1921 and was acted at the Imperial Theatre, but for only two performances. There was trouble with the censor, who seems to have objected to such cruel treatment of the tender sex. In a letter to me (October, 1923)

Mr. Sudzuki admits having modified the play somewhat before publication, though he doubts whether the original version would have caused difficulty in Western countries.

Mr. Sudzuki lists, as the foreign dramatists who have exercised the greatest influence on his thought and style, Schnitzler, Strindberg, Hauptmann and O'Neill. He expresses the opinion that no living Japanese dramatist is the equal of the old masters, but he believes that the new era has just begun, and that soon there will be great dramatists contributing to the modern Japanese stage.

In concluding the letter mentioned above, he says : " I do some editing of magazines—*The New Drama* and *The New Home*—but I have been ill since last summer—sick in bed the whole year—so I have had to give up my editorial duties. Now I shall devote all my time to plays. At present I am writing a three-act tragedy. . . . Luckily my house escaped the earthquake, so I am still living in Tokyo."

Poor devil ! He escaped the earthquake, but he did not escape his illness, and the three-act tragedy ended with his own death, but a few months after this letter was written.

Conclusion.

These three lives, even when presented thus hastily and piecemeal, show unmistakable nobility. They are representative of many modern Japanese, who, born to an age of transition and turmoil, struggle with all their might to reconcile within themselves the conflicting ideals of East and West, old and new. They cannot all succeed. We who are responsible for much of this turmoil, who have battered down the ancient gates and carried our noisy wares into the very heart of the sleeping city, must look with a sympathetic eye on the confusion which results. The fellow-countrymen of Ibsen, Shaw, O'Neill, and the rest of the giants of our theatre, will surely lend willing ears to the echoes of Western drama which drift across half the world, and will applaud when the echo rings with a note of truth or moves to a rhythm of beauty.

October 1st, 1928. Glenn Hughes.

DEATH

A DRAMA

In Prologue, Five Scenes and Epilogue

by

TAKEO ARISHIMA

(Authorized Translation)

CHARACTERS

Death
Men in Black
The Husband
The Wife, *her name being* Eiko
A Physician
A Nurse
Granny, *an old woman-servant*
The Friend
Three Students
A Detective
Three Children

PROLOGUE

When the curtain rises the stage is dark save for a very small light near the back, in centre. There is silence for several moments, then, from somewhere near the light comes the voice of DEATH. *The voice is devoid of emotion.*

DEATH : Again a little bubble floating on the current of time has reached the hour when it must burst.

[*Silence. Then the voice continues.*

Again the time has come for us to lock up a life. See that the lock is ready ! See that the key is not rusted ! Prepare !

[*Silence once more. Gradually the stage becomes brighter.* DEATH *is seen sitting behind the light. Grey walls form the background. A number of black figures can be seen crouching around the light in a semi-circle.*

See that all is in readiness.

[*The figures nod at his command, and continue to nod assent during his next speech.*

The voice of sorrow and suffering shall again rise for a little while from the current of time. But it will be so small it can barely be heard. The men whose walk through life will be disturbed by it are fewer than the fingers of two hands. The rest of humanity will move on as ever, swiftly, aimlessly. (*A pause.*) But small voices or loud voices, it does not matter ; they are the same. In the end, everything will be silence. The sound of heavenly music, the cry of a newborn child—these will no longer be heard. All will be nothingness. All will be equal. (*Another pause.*) Are the locks and the keys in order ? A life is a life, even though it be a small one. We must never, by any chance, mislay the lock. Slowly, surely, this light must be dimmed. (*Another moment of silence.*) Quietly, patiently, coldly, we must await the time when every light in the world is dimmed, when everything has ceased to move. I shall forget my own existence. This light must share the destiny of all lights—to fade away. Therefore, prepare ! (*The light trembles.*) Behold, the light is suffering !

VOICE OF THE WIFE : It is too warm ! It is too warm !

VOICE OF THE HUSBAND : Are you suffering from the heat ? I will fan you.

VOICE OF THE WIFE : No ! No !

[*As these voices are heard, the* MEN IN BLACK *start to rise.*

DEATH : Be still ! (*The* WIFE *is heard moaning. Again the* MEN IN BLACK *start to rise.*) Be still ! Do you care so much about life, you pitiable creatures ? Think of eternity, and look toward the end of all life. Be not impatient ! And do not assume dignity, either. Those who are certain of triumph have no need of dignity. Do what life commands you, and let there be no excitement over it.

VOICE OF THE HUSBAND : Let me fan you.

VOICE OF THE WIFE : No ; never mind. If you stay awake I shan't be able to sleep. Please go back to sleep.

DEATH : That is right. Console each other while you may. Time runs on without a break. (*To the* MEN IN BLACK.) Go, all of you, and help the one who is dying. I shall remain here, calmly watching the light. (*A silence.*) To-morrow morning, when the sun rises, bringing new life to the world, shining with new light from the eastern sky upon the mountains and the summer sea, when all things offer up praises of joy and hope—in the midst of it all, this light of a woman's life shall fade. Everything will go on as before. To-morrow morning at seven o'clock. Do not forget that ; to-morrow morning at seven o'clock !

[*The stage grows darker until it is as it was at the beginning of the Prologue. The little light flickers. There is silence for a time.*

VOICE OF GRANNY : Madam, I have come back.

VOICE OF HUSBAND : Well, what did he say ?

VOICE OF GRANNY : The head physician has already gone to

bed, but he said he would be here to-morrow morning at eight.

VOICE OF THE WIFE : So. Thank you.

VOICE OF THE HUSBAND : If he is coming, why can't he come earlier ?

DEATH (*after a dreadful silence*) : It would make no difference.

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY.

SAINT PETER'S COLLEGE LIBRARY
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

SCENE I

A small villa at the seaside. The sliding doors which form the outer wall of the house are all open, so that we look directly into the various small rooms into which the main portion of the building is divided. At one side of the stage is a garden in which there are some pine trees and about ten pots of morning-glory vines. There is a porch along the side of the house adjoining the garden. A rattan chair with a soft cushion sits on the porch. In one of the rooms is seen the young WIFE, *pale and thin, lying on a bed made of heavy quilts and a white sheet placed on the floor. She lies face upwards, breathing with great effort, and fanning herself weakly. Beside the bed is some mosquito-netting. Japanese lanterns hang from the roof. In one of the other rooms the Nurse can be seen removing her white dress and making ready her bed. It is night-time. From the distance comes the sound of the sea and the singing of insects. The curtain rises. There is a pause, then the clock strikes ten.*

WIFE : Nurse !

NURSE (*replying gently but somewhat unwillingly*) : Yes, ma'am ?

WIFE : Before you go to bed please change the ice-pack again.

[*The* NURSE, *without bothering to put her white apron back on, goes reluctantly to the kitchen where she can be heard cracking ice. The* HUSBAND *appears from his room.*

HUSBAND : Ts ! Ts ! Ts ! (*In a low voice.*) They are all like that—every nurse we have had ! Did she forget it again ?

WIFE : Haven't you been asleep yet ?

HUSBAND : I have been dozing. Isn't it terribly hot to-night ? I think I had better stay up. If I sleep I have bad dreams.

WIFE : What did the clock strike just now—twelve ?

HUSBAND : No ; it is only ten.

WIFE : Is that all ? The night is so long !

HUSBAND (*sympathetically*) : Yes, isn't it ? (*He strokes her forehead*). My ! how you are sweating ! (*Takes a handkerchief from beside the bed and tries to wipe off her brow.*)

WIFE : Don't come so close to me. How careless you are ! You might be infected.

HUSBAND : Don't be silly.

WIFE : I am not silly. If you were to become tubercular too, what would happen to the children ?

HUSBAND : Don't look on the dark side of things. You should be thinking of how happy the children will be when you get well.

WIFE : Now you are trying to console me.

[*She turns away from him petulantly, then, after a moment, speaks more tenderly.*

Please don't be angry with me. I am certain I am going to die soon, and during our last hours together we must be kind to each other.

[*While she is speaking she coughs from time to time, and spits weakly. This occurs during future speeches as well.*

HUSBAND : You are so silly. It was you who were angry.

WIFE : Yes, it was, wasn't it ? But please don't mind. I can't help being angry when you say things just to console me. Lately I have seen so clearly that I am dying, and I can also see with terrible clearness what is truth and what is falsehood. Even you tell me falsehoods to console me. It makes me feel so utterly alone. That, then——

[*She is interrupted by the entrance of the* NURSE, *carrying five ice-packs.*

NURSE : I just changed them a little while ago, so I didn't suppose it was time to change them again. Have they melted already ?

HUSBAND (*putting his hand to the ice-pack on his wife's forehead*) : See this ? It is already warm. It's as warm as tea.

[*The* NURSE *places fresh ice-packs under the patient's head, on her forehead, chest, etc.*

NURSE : By the way, I will take your temperature.

WIFE : No. I don't want you to. It annoys me.

NURSE : It won't take long.

HUSBAND (*irritably*) : Let it go this time. It doesn't matter.

[*The outside door on the far side of the house is heard opening. This is followed by the sound of someone removing his shoes. The* NURSE, *realising that it is the* PHYSICIAN, *goes out hurriedly to meet him. In a moment she returns, bringing him with her. After exchanging nods with the* HUSBAND, *the* PHYSICIAN *goes to the sick-bed and looks down at the* WIFE.

PHYSICIAN : How do you feel ?

HUSBAND (*speaking for his* WIFE) : She is suffering a great deal this evening. Her breathing is hard, as you see. But her mind is as clear as can be. (*To the* NURSE.) Where is the report ?

[*The* NURSE, *by this time, is in her own room dressing her hair before a mirror, and does not reply.*

PHYSICIAN : Never mind. (*He feels the* WIFE'S *pulse calmly. To her.*) Have you any appetite ?

HUSBAND : To-night she developed a sudden craving for some smoked salmon from Hokkaido. So she ate a little of it, along with some rice soup and some Kombu tea. She wanted an apple, too, but I thought it would be too hard for her to digest. Besides, we couldn't get fresh ones.

PHYSICIAN : Oh, a little apple wouldn't hurt her. (*To the* WIFE.) Eat anything you feel like eating. Your stomach is all right. How did you enjoy the smoked salmon and the Kombu tea ?—— Is that so ? Fine ! It tasted of Hokkaido, eh ?

[*The* NURSE *returns with her white clothes on, and shows the report in a professional manner.*

You sent for the head physician, but he had just retired. He will be here in the morning, but in the meantime I thought I would drop in and see you anyway.

[*He removes some of the ice-packs from the* WIFE, *and adjusts his stethoscope to her chest. Then he turns her over on her face.*

She is breathing painfully. He shrugs his shoulders. Presently he feels her feet.

Do your feet feel cold? If they do we will put hot-water bags on them. (*The* NURSE *nods assent.*) There doesn't seem to be any change for the worse. But you must keep very quiet, and not get excited. I will give you one more injection.

[*He prepares to make the injection.*

WIFE: That stuff smells different to-day.

PHYSICIAN: Ah, after two years of illness you are getting very sharp about these things. Yes, I am making a little change in the injection to-day.

[*The* PHYSICIAN *makes the injection and prepares to leave. He indicates with his eyes that he wishes the husband to follow him from the room, but the* HUSBAND, *for fear the* WIFE *will notice, does not do so. The* NURSE *accompanies the* PHYSICIAN *to the adjoining room, but returns at once.*

NURSE (*to the* HUSBAND): He wants to give you a message from the head physician.

HUSBAND (*alarmed, but pretending calmness*): Is that so?

[*He goes into the next room where the* PHYSICIAN *is awaiting him. They are still in the sight of the audience.*

PHYSICIAN: Her condition is a great deal worse. You will have to be extremely careful.

HUSBAND (*looking at the* PHYSICIAN): . . .

PHYSICIAN: If there are any final questions which you wish to ask her, you had better ask them to-night.

HUSBAND: I understand.

NURSE (*trying to cover the conversation of the two men*): Madam, when I was on my way to the hospital to get the doctor, I saw that dog—you know, that big dog that is always around here . . .

WIFE (*interrupting her sharply*): Never mind about that just now.

NURSE : But it was so funny ! A youngster threw a stone, and . . .

WIFE (*in a lower tone but still sharply*) : Keep still ! (*She lifts her head to listen.*)

PHYSICIAN : And if you wish to send word to anyone, you had better do so at once.

HUSBAND : I have already written. And how about the children ? They have not seen their mother for more than a year. What shall I do about them ?

PHYSICIAN : Well, it seems very cruel, but unless she insists on seeing them, I advise against it. You can't tell what might result —it would be very dangerous for them and for her too. If you keep them away you will at least have avoided one danger. You see, as a physician I feel it my duty to protect human life until the last moment. That is why I advise against their seeing each other. But if . . .

HUSBAND : I understand. I understand perfectly.

PHYSICIAN : And after all, if she were to see them, it would only increase the sadness for all of you.

HUSBAND : Yes, I know that.

PHYSICIAN : Perhaps I have said more than I should. That injection I gave her was to put her to sleep. If there is any change in her condition, send for me, and I shall come at once. I sympathize with you in your anxiety.

HUSBAND : Thank you, Doctor. You have done your best. It is Fate.

PHYSICIAN (*speaking loudly, for the* WIFE *to overhear*) : Well, that is all the head physician asked me to tell you. If you use that medicine I think it will have a very good effect on her.

HUSBAND (*raising his voice also*) : Thank you for your kindness. You have been very good.

[*The* PHYSICIAN *leaves the house. The* HUSBAND *comes back into the sickroom.*

(*To the* NURSE.) You had better go to bed. If the ice-packs need changing I shall call you.

NURSE : I will stay up a little while yet.

HUSBAND : No ; you need some sleep. You will have to stay on duty to-morrow while I sleep. And by the way, before you go to bed, I want you to go to the neighbour's and telephone the grocery to bring some apples. It may be too late for them to deliver them to-night, but if so, they can bring them early in the morning.

[*The* NURSE *goes into her own room and closes the sliding screens.*

WIFE : Has the Nurse gone to bed ?

HUSBAND : I think so. How do you feel now ? Did the injection help any ?

WIFE : I never have felt so well as I do now. It is so much easier to breathe. But I am sweating all over. Isn't it terribly warm to-night ? Oh, I wish it weren't so hot !

HUSBAND : Yes, it is very warm to-night. (*He looks out at the sky.*) It seems as though it were going to rain, but still it doesn't.

WIFE : It seems as though I were going to die, but still I don't. Oh, this terrible waiting !

HUSBAND : What are you saying ?

[*There is a silence.*

WIFE : Darling !

HUSBAND : What is it ?

WIFE : What did the Physician say to you ?

HUSBAND : He was telling me about the medicine the head physician prescribed for you.

WIFE : But you were talking with him so long.

HUSBAND : Not very long, was I ?

[*There is silence again for a few minutes.*

WIFE : Dear . . .

HUSBAND : Yes ?

WIFE : . . . About the children . . .

HUSBAND : Well ?

WIFE : It would be better for me not to see them ?

HUSBAND (*startled*) : Who said so ? If you want to see them I will bring them over to you any time. Would you like to see them now ?

WIFE : No. (*After a pause.*) We must not lie to each other any longer.

HUSBAND (*realising her meaning*) : You are right. We must not.

WIFE : And I must stop asking you silly questions. After all, a person knows much better than anyone else whether he is going to live or die.

HUSBAND : . . .

WIFE : I only wish I could be taking care of you as you are taking care of me.

HUSBAND (*with a weak attempt at humour*) : Heaven forbid ! I don't want to be sick !

WIFE (*laughing faintly*) : Of course not.

HUSBAND : And the chances are a thousand to one that I won't be. But if I were, I should be furious unless you waited on me ten times as much as I wait on you.

WIFE : There you go, telling me more lies ! I wish you wouldn't lie to me !

HUSBAND : I'm not lying.

[*The* WIFE *suddenly becomes petulant. There is a long silence.*

I was wrong, Eiko dear, but I so wanted to help you get well. And you are going to get well. I don't care what they say. I am going to help you get well ! What my lips say may not be true, but my ears are going to believe it just the same.

WIFE (*deeply affected*) : I was wrong to be angry, and I am sorry. I know how you feel, but you mustn't say anything to me that will weaken my resolution to die. Let's change the subject and talk of something pleasant before the pain comes back again, shan't we ?

HUSBAND : But you must get some rest. (*He realises instantly that this is another attempt to console her with falsehood.*) Ts ! Ts ! Ts ! I am so clumsy. Always saying the wrong thing. You are right. We will talk—all night, if you like.

WIFE : I am so glad ! (*She gives him a happy look.*) Tell me something.

HUSBAND : Well, what do you want me to tell you ? (*A pause.*) Do you remember, just after we were married, you made me tell you a story every night when we went to bed ?

WIFE : And at the end of the month you ran out of stories.

HUSBAND : I think it was very good to last a month. You were insatiable ! You made me tell you the story of Tolstoy's "A Woman's Resurrection " from beginning to end all in one night. And I got so excited over it. What a fool I was then ! And you were so unreasonable—that is why I ran out of stories at the end of a month. But, anyway, you learned a great deal from them.

WIFE : Yes, you taught me many things. During those days my heart bloomed as it never had before, and never did again. Since then I have grown duller and duller.

HUSBAND : I, too, have grown dull and uninteresting. (*He laughs and changes the subject.*) Hadn't I better shut all the doors ? Don't you think this night air is too much for you ?

WIFE : No. Keep the doors wide open. If you close them it will be too warm in here, and I shan't be able to breathe. (*She looks out.*) Isn't it cloudy ? I can't see a single star.

HUSBAND (*looking out at the sky*) : Yes, clouds are flying across the sky, though there is no wind. August always brings a wild kind of weather. Now I can see one star. Can't you ?

WIFE : Yes.

HUSBAND : There ! It has disappeared again.

WIFE (*meditatively*) : I have said farewell to the stars. No, no ! That isn't true. I was only joking. I never have felt things to be so beautiful before. I love everything ! This world has been wonderful to me ; even my sorrows and troubles seem beautiful to me now. I am going to get well ! I am sure I am going to get well !

HUSBAND : That's the way to talk ! Of course you will get well. (*They are both silent for a time before he goes on speaking.*) Your troubles and your angry moods would seem foolish to the hard, unemotional people of the world, but to me they are beautiful memories, even though at times they may have annoyed me. (*He forces a little laugh.*) You couldn't die before I finish my career ; if you did I should never amount to anything. So, you see, you must live for my sake. During the two years you have been sick I have let my work go, but I have done a great deal of thinking, and as a result I now see my way clear before me. It hasn't done me a bit of harm to be idle for a while. I was working too hard before—that is what was the matter with me. You know, I never did accomplish anything worth while. I don't see how you could have stood by me so patiently, except that you have such a marvellous disposition.

WIFE : But you did accomplish a great deal.

HUSBAND : All the things I tried were failures ; they were worse than nothing.

WIFE : But your students admire you and feel indebted to you.

HUSBAND : That means nothing. A lost sheep cannot lead others. What I should do is keep silent and watch myself. I am ashamed to tell you these things, but I am such a coward I can't help it.

WIFE : You mustn't say such things. You will make me want to die. But dear . . .

HUSBAND : Yes.

WIFE : My diary . . .

[*She is interrupted by the entrance of* GRANNY, *clothed in her nightgown.*

GRANNY : Master, excuse my appearance.

HUSBAND : What's the matter ? What are you doing up this time of night ?

GRANNY : You may laugh at me again, but I dreamt a queer dream.

HUSBAND : More dreams to interpret, eh ? Well, never mind. Go back to bed.

GRANNY : I beg your pardon, but how is the mistress ? Is she asleep ?

HUSBAND : No ; she is awake. Why ?

GRANNY : Well then . . . (*She goes out mumbling confusedly. There are a few moments of silence.*)

WIFE : Do you remember . . . I didn't want to show you my diary . . . that one with the blue cover.

HUSBAND : Yes.

WIFE : I put it away in the closet—no, no ; don't look at it yet. Let me have your hand. (*She takes her* HUSBAND'S *hand with one of hers, and pats it affectionately with her other.*) If . . . if I die . . . you may read it. But of course I am going to get well, and I promise not to bother you so much in the future. I am going to help you as much as I can in your work. Do you understand ?

HUSBAND : . . .

WIFE : Please don't be angry with me.

HUSBAND : Why should I be angry ? (*A pause.*) Of course you are going to get well. And you must be very careful of yourself every moment of your life. I'm afraid you are tired now. Do you want me to talk to you any longer ? Is there anything else you wish to say ?

WIFE : No ; nothing more.

HUSBAND : Then won't you try to sleep ?

WIFE : Yes, I will. And you must get some sleep too.

HUSBAND : No ; I am all right. Besides, the mosquitoes will keep you awake unless I stay here and fan them away. You go to sleep and stop worrying about me.

WIFE : But I can't sleep unless you do.

HUSBAND : You are so stubborn ! Very well, then. I will sleep too.

WIFE : Please do. And you will take good care of yourself, won't you ? Good-night, dear.

[*The* HUSBAND *goes into his own room. The* WIFE's *breathing grows heavier. She fans herself with great effort. Then the medicine begins to take effect. The fan drops from her hand and she goes into a deep sleep. The* HUSBAND *returns and moves to the side of the bed. He picks up the fan and fans the sleeping* WIFE. GRANNY *slips softly into the room.*

GRANNY : Master, how is the mistress ?

HUSBAND (*irritably*) : She has dropped off to sleep.

GRANNY : Master, since I had that dream I can't sleep. It was so real. God called my mistress away. And, master, God's face looked just like yours !

HUSBAND : Nonsense ! What are you talking about ? Get back to bed at once !

GRANNY : But I'm afraid to !

HUSBAND : Do you hear me ? Get back to bed !

GRANNY : Excuse me, sir, but you know, master, that blessed are they that believe in God !

HUSBAND : Leave your preaching till to-morrow. I have other things to think about. Now go on back to bed.

GRANNY (*reluctantly*) : Well, if you say so, I must. Good night, master.

[*She leaves. The* HUSBAND *looks into the* WIFE's *face. The stage gradually darkens.*

DARK CHANGE OF SCENE.

SCENE II

This scene represents the WIFE'S *dream. The stage is set as in the Prologue.* DEATH *is seen seated as before, near the centre, behind the little light. At one side the* HUSBAND *sits in a chair, reading a book. On the other side of the room are the* WIFE *and* GRANNY, *seated Japanese style on the floor. They are sewing at baby garments.*

GRANNY : Isn't it terribly hot ? What's the use of being here in Hokkai-do if it's going to be as hot as this ? The heat makes you suffer more. Has the ice melted yet ? What has become of that Nurse ? She is always at the neighbour's, gossiping. It is shameful ! Shall I change the ice-packs, madam ?

WIFE : What are you talking about, Granny ? What would you be doing with ice-packs ?

GRANNY : You are the one that is talking queer, madam. I am so worried about you ! And you will need proper nursing if you are to get well. You must be quiet and keep something cold on your chest. Sitting up this way is the worst thing you could be doing. Shan't I get the bed ready for you ?

WIFE : You are certainly crazy ! Why, I never felt better. You are a funny one !

GRANNY : But you don't know what is good for you. You have got so used to the fever that now you don't notice it. Your temperature is one hundred and one.

WIFE : How many times do I have to tell you, Granny, that I am not sick at all, and don't intend to be for at least five years. Don't you know that ?

GRANNY : Is that so ? Why, of course you are right. I am getting so old I don't know what I am talking about.

[*The old woman laughs immoderately, and the* WIFE *joins in. Then, simultaneously, as from a sudden impulse, they stop laughing. There is a moment of anxious silence.*

WIFE : How hot it is ! What makes it so hot ?

GRANNY : Hell is going by.

[*The two women resume their sewing. The* HUSBAND *leaves off reading and lifts his head as if to listen to something far off.*

HUSBAND : Eiko, there is your favourite cuckoo singing. Do you hear it ?

WIFE : Is it really ? (*She listens.*) Yes, I hear it ! (*After a moment.*) Isn't it lovely ?

[*The* HUSBAND *resumes his reading. The* WIFE *sews, stopping from time to time to listen to the song of the bird.*

Dearest !

HUSBAND (*still reading*) : Eh ?

WIFE (*indicating the cloth on which she is sewing*) : You don't like this colour, do you ?

HUSBAND : Um—m.

WIFE : Do you like it ?

HUSBAND : Um—m.

WIFE : Well, which is it—do you or don't you ? (*Playfully.*) You stupid thing !

HUSBAND : What do you want me to say ?

WIFE : Oh, never mind ! You're not interested.

HUSBAND (*looking up from his book*) : I am interested, but whenever I show any interest you bother the life out of me. (*Teasing her.*) You are the stupid one, my dear.

WIFE : No ; you don't care a bit. I don't like you !

HUSBAND : All right. (*Returns to his book.*)

WIFE : You do nothing but read. You are not at all interested in what I am making.

HUSBAND : Oh, you are such a chatterbox ! What is it ? (*He rises and crosses to the* WIFE, *looking down curiously at the child's dress she is holding.*) What is it ?

WIFE : Never mind what it is !

HUSBAND : But I do mind. Why, that's a child's dress ! Is it time to get ready for that ? Let me see it.

WIFE : No ; you run along and read your book.

HUSBAND (*sitting down beside the* WIFE) : This isn't a bad colour, though it is pretty bright. What if the baby should be a boy ?

WIFE (*blushing*) : Don't be silly ! I won't have a boy. I don't like men—they are all such fools !

HUSBAND (*to the old woman*) : Granny, have you any children ?

GRANNY : Yes, I have. It sounds funny to call them children now, though—they are all grown up. I have three sons and a daughter, and the youngest of them is thirty years old.

HUSBAND : How splendid !

GRANNY : There's nothing splendid about it. Every one of them went to the bad. I can't see now how it could have been worth while for me to bring them into the world. (*To the* WIFE.) One of my sons went to jail, madam, and my daughter never would listen to me that much ! (*Holds up her needle.*) Besides that, my husband is an awful drunkard. Every morning I pray that no new calamity will fall upon me. They say that because of the first sin, every woman must suffer in childbirth, but I tell you that worse than the pain of bringing them into the world is the pain of raising them. There are no words to describe that suffering. This is a miserable world. I hate it ! No one is to be trusted. Everyone is looking for your weakness, and when they discover it, they take advantage of you. I wish with all my heart that I could leave this world and pass on into heaven !

WIFE : Why, Granny, you mustn't talk that way ! There are wicked people in the world, but there are good ones, too.

GRANNY : Madam. . . .

WIFE (*interrupting*) : You believe in God, don't you ?

GRANNY : Yes, and that is my one consolation.

WIFE : Well, God created man, and God is good, so man must have some goodness in him.

GRANNY : Yes, but, madam, since our ancestors, Adam and Eve, sinned against the will of God, it is hopeless to expect good of any man. They are all deceitful—except your husband, of course, madam.

WIFE : If you think evil of others, you will become evil yourself.

GRANNY : The Bible says, " Be ye wise as the serpent." Unless you keep a sharp eye on men they will not only sin against themselves, but against you as well. Of course a man like your husband, a faithful member of the church, is an exception.

HUSBAND (*pacing up and down thoughtfully*) : By the way, I withdrew my church membership about a week ago.

GRANNY : What ! Is that true ?

WIFE : Yes ; that is true.

GRANNY : My master ! Oh, how terrible ! (*To the* WIFE.) He has yielded to worldly vanity ! But surely it must be for only a short time. He is such a noble character ! A poor old woman like me can't expect to understand his reasons for doing such a thing. After all, life is very hard.

HUSBAND : Granny, whenever you talk about life being hard, you look very happy. I think you get enjoyment even out of your troubles. But incidentally, with all this talking aren't you forgetting the ice-packs ? They must be melted by this time.

GRANNY : Yes, yes, of course ! (*Gets hurriedly to her feet.*)

WIFE : What do you want with ice-packs ?

HUSBAND : Surely you know that. If you don't take care of yourself you will have a high fever again. And that reminds me, it's time to take your temperature.

WIFE : You and Granny are both crazy to-day. Didn't you hear me say just now that I wouldn't be sick for at least five years ?

HUSBAND : Aren't you really sick ?

WIFE : Can't you see how well I look ?

HUSBAND : Yes, you do. (*He looks at her happily.*) You are right.

[*All three persons burst into hearty laughter, then, by a common impulse, stop suddenly.*

GRANNY : Hell is going by.

WIFE : Granny, go to the kitchen and heat some water. It is time to be getting supper.

[GRANNY *goes out. The* HUSBAND *resumes his reading. The* WIFE *puts away her sewing. One of the* MEN IN BLACK *enters, showing in the character who is known as the* FRIEND. *It is to be noted that whenever anyone enters during this scene he comes in with bowed head and closed eyes. When he reaches the centre of the stage he lifts his head and opens his eyes.*

HUSBAND : There ! The cuckoo is singing again. (*He sees the* FRIEND.) Oh, is that you ! When did you come in ? I didn't see you.

FRIEND : I called to you, but you didn't answer, so I came right on in. How do you do, madam ?

WIFE : How do you do. It is very warm to-day, isn't it ?

FRIEND (*to the* HUSBAND) : That fellow was here again, was he ?

HUSBAND : Yes.

WIFE : He disgusts me ! But it really was funny the first time he came.

HUSBAND : You see, I was not at home when he called, and my wife and Granny were terribly frightened at him. He looked fiercely through his smoked spectacles at Granny and said, " I work for the high class ! " They couldn't imagine what he meant, but by the time I got home they had come to the conclusion that he meant he was a teacher in the high school.

FRIEND : Well, they couldn't be expected to know that he was a high-class detective. Everything is called high-class nowadays anyway. And what did he say the last time he was here ?

HUSBAND : That he had authority to question me regarding my principles. He was very polite, but he looked me through and through.

FRIEND : And then . . .

WIFE : My husband told him the most dreadful things ! I was listening, and I was so frightened !

HUSBAND (*to the* WIFE) : By the way, what about tea ?

[*One of the* MEN IN BLACK *enters bearing the tea-things. The* WIFE *looks at him suspiciously. He bows politely and leaves.*

WIFE (*looking after him and touching her* HUSBAND'S *arm*) : What a strange man that was !

HUSBAND : Why, there's nothing strange about him. What do you mean ?

WIFE : Is he a new servant you have hired ?

HUSBAND : How silly ? He has been working for us a long time.

WIFE (*as though ashamed of having made a mistake*) : Oh, of course ! But he is so queer ! I don't like him. Where is Granny !

HUSBAND : She is getting supper ready. (*To the* FRIEND.) Now that there is a so-called high-class detective on my trail, it will be good-bye to my teaching position.

FRIEND : Oh, I don't think so. That would be a great loss to the school, and there would be many disappointed students. You have an excellent reputation, you know.

HUSBAND : Reputation ! No, I am not the sort of man to be teaching. I am not even sure of myself ; how can I hope to guide others ? But there are so many promising young fellows among my students—some of them positively brilliant—I hate the idea of leaving them.

FRIEND : You have already withdrawn from the church, have you not ?

HUSBAND : Yes. (*After a pause.*) Bring me some hot water.

[*A* MAN IN BLACK *enters carrying a kettle of hot water. He then makes the tea and serves it. The* WIFE *watches him in terror.*

You can understand, of course, why I withdrew from the church. But to my wife it was a great shock. Yesterday I had a letter from her father. In it he said that she never used to consult him about me, but that this time she was greatly worried. Naturally he wanted to know the trouble. (*To the* WIFE.) You didn't see that letter, did you ? Here it is. (*Hands it to her, then speaks to the* FRIEND.) You know when I joined the church in the first place, my own father almost drove me out of his house. You can imagine from that how hard it was for me to decide to withdraw. But finally I made up my mind, and after all, it was the best thing to do.

WIFE : But you still believe in God, don't you ?

HUSBAND : Well—now, if someone were to ask you what rice tastes like, could you give them a definite answer ? It is a terrible thing to say that you don't believe in God, but it is also terrible to say that you do.

WIFE : No one can ever pin you down. You always resort to vague statements.

HUSBAND : You think so ?

WIFE : I can't make out what you really believe.

HUSBAND : You will in time, and you won't like it.

FRIEND : There is a rumour that you left the church because of some misconduct with a woman.

HUSBAND : Is that so ? Well, slander is better than undeserved praise.

FRIEND : True ! (*Changing the subject.*) You have been married about a year now ; you should be able to give others advice as to how happy marriage is.

HUSBAND : You rascal ! You are as clumsy as ever ! Don't you know better than to bring up such questions before my wife ? Sometimes I am happy and sometimes I am not. My wife has her share of dark days, too. But the first thing I gave her after our marriage was her freedom, and the first thing I claimed from her was my freedom. It is understood between us that when we feel like separating, we can.

FRIEND (*laughing*) : That is what you call neo-romanticism.

HUSBAND : It is the most natural arrangement. I have thought it out carefully, and I intend to live up to it.

FRIEND : Well, at least it will be interesting to watch your future. By the way, I suppose you are going to the meeting to-night ? I'll stop in for you after supper and we can go together. Good-bye !

[*He leaves.*

WIFE (*looking after him*) : How peculiar he is ! He comes in without saying anything and leaves the same way. (*She puts the teacups away.*) And now I'd like to go home to my parents.

HUSBAND : What are you talking about ?

WIFE : You want me to go, don't you ? Deep down in your heart you regret our marriage, don't you ?

HUSBAND : Sometimes I do, yes. But even then I feel that if we had not married, my life would have been more unhappy.—See ! I am losing my friends one after another ; there are only a few of them left now. I no longer have God or the church. And if I am dismissed from the school, my heart will be as empty as a house made ready for autumn cleaning. You are all that is left to inhabit it.

WIFE : I shall be the only undusted piece of furniture left in the house.—If you had only married her instead, you would not be as lonely as you now are. And life is sad for her, too. She is

always sick in bed. You know, I have been stubborn ever since I was a child. I never used to cry. My mother said I was not loveable at all. I grew up thinking the world was a very lonely, cold, and cruel place, in which everyone must look out for himself. Then I met you, and my heart softened. That was my mistake. But tell me, why didn't you marry her ?

HUSBAND : I never once thought of marrying her.

WIFE : But didn't you tell your father that if you ever married, you would marry her ?

HUSBAND : Oh, that was when my father tried to marry me to another woman whom I didn't even know. If I was going to be forced to marry, I wanted it to be someone I at least knew. Poor girl ! I am sorry for her, but I never was the least bit in love with her.

WIFE : And yet I understand you were all broken up when she married.

HUSBAND : You are always accusing me of that, and it annoys me. What is it about me, anyway, that you dislike ? Tell me the exact truth, and I will change, if I can. Stop torturing me ! It is like sticking needles into me !

WIFE : You get angry every time I mention her.

HUSBAND : I am not angry. I don't mean to be. It merely gets on my nerves.

WIFE : You're a slippery one !—Why did you withdraw from the church ? You never discussed it with me. Of course you think I wouldn't be of any help to you, but there is some good reason for your withdrawal, and it has nothing to do with scandal.

HUSBAND : It is true I did not make a special point of discussing it with you, but I have always told you I would not be able to lead a serene, Christ-like life. I never dreamed of being able to. And it is bad for the church to have in it men like me.

WIFE : If that is your reason, you will not be able to stop people gossiping.

HUSBAND : I know it. I deserve it.

WIFE : Nonsense ! How perverse you are !

HUSBAND : Not at all. It is you who take the wrong side of

everything. But there will come a time when I shall have to make a full confession to you.

WIFE : I wish you would not be so sarcastic. And please forgive me for saying such things.

HUSBAND : You accuse me of being sarcastic, but actually you are the one who is using sarcasm. Say whatever you like, but I am no longer such a fool as the hero in de Maupassant's novel, who inscribed a beautiful epitaph on his unfaithful wife's tombstone. I am not such a fool as that !

WIFE : What are you saying ?

HUSBAND (*suddenly overcome with shame*) : What *am* I saying !

WIFE : I gave you your freedom ; you can do as you please.

HUSBAND : And I gave you your freedom. How did you use it ?

WIFE : Go on ! Say what you like ! You are so cruel ! (*She hides her face in her sleeves.*)

[GRANNY *enters.*

GRANNY : Master, there's a man called High Class here to see you.

HUSBAND : Tell him to come back later. It's supper time now.

GRANNY : Yes, master, that's what I told him. I was smart enough to think of that. But he insisted on seeing you now.

HUSBAND : Very well, then ; show him in.

WIFE : Do you think it is safe ?

HUSBAND : Safe or not safe, I can't help it.

[*The high-class* DETECTIVE *enters. He looks around through his dark-glass spectacles. Without being invited to do so, he sits down on a chair. He stares at the* WIFE, *who a moment later goes out with* GRANNY *to prepare supper. The* HUSBAND *bows slightly, then paces back and forth, saying nothing.*

DETECTIVE : Are you going to the meeting to-night ?

HUSBAND : Yes, if I feel like it.—Mr. Detective, it may be none of my business, but why don't you quit your job ? Doesn't it make you feel uncomfortable, always trailing people in a suspicious way ? I can't believe that's the right sort of job for you.

DETECTIVE : I don't know that it matters what you think. It is what I think that counts.

[*There is an unpleasant silence.*

What are you going to discuss at the meeting to-night?

HUSBAND: I shall decide that after I get there.

DETECTIVE: But you have some idea what it will be about.

HUSBAND: Even so, it is not necessary that I tell you.

DETECTIVE: It is my duty to ask you, and I have the right to do so.

HUSBAND: On the other hand, I have the right to tell you, but it is not my duty to do so. And this time I do not feel like using that right. If your bureau wishes to know what I am going to say, surely it has in its service some man who can get the information from me in a respectable manner.

[*Another unpleasant silence.*

DETECTIVE: I understand that you often go, during the day, to houses of ill-fame, and cafés of bad reputation.

HUSBAND: Well, it is better that I visit such places in the daytime than at night.

DETECTIVE: And besides this, if I may take the liberty of mentioning it, you have had an affair with another man's wife.

HUSBAND (*pacing back and forth*): . . .

DETECTIVE: The principal of your school is, it seems, very liberal; but society is not. You should be careful about such things.

[*The* FRIEND *has re-entered during this speech. He stands listening.*

HUSBAND: I suggest that you confine yourself strictly to your duty, even though it be not especially admirable.

DETECTIVE: Very well, then—I shall perform my duty. I have a warrant for your arrest. Come to the police station with me.

FRIEND (*coming between the two, and speaking to the* DETECTIVE): Don't cause any trouble until you know definitely what this man has done and what principles he holds. You have no evidence as yet. Think what it will mean if he is arrested! He will lose his position; and that will immediately affect his livelihood. His newly established home will be broken up. It will bring grief to his young wife, who is in a delicate condition with child. You must consider all these things!

DETECTIVE : I am performing my duty—nothing more. I have the warrant for his arrest. (*To the* HUSBAND.) You had better come with me at once.

FRIEND : But I tell you, you must not !

DETECTIVE : Don't interfere with me ! Who are you anyway ? (*He notices that the* FRIEND'S *chest bulges unnaturally.*) What have you got there ? Come on ! Show me ! (*He thrusts his hand suddenly into the* FRIEND'S *bosom.*) You may be concealing dangerous weapons, damn you ! (*He pulls out a toothbrush and some soap wrapped in a wet towel.*)

FRIEND : I have just come from a public bath house. And see here, Mr. Detective, if you take this man to the police station you will be fooled just as you were in my case.

DETECTIVE : You shut up ! (*To the* HUSBAND.) Come on now.

HUSBAND : You are really going to arrest me ? Very well, then ; I will go with you. (*Calling.*) Eiko ! I shall be back soon, so don't worry. Everything will be cleared up as soon as I go and explain. (*To the* FRIEND.) You stay and look after things, will you ?

[*The* WIFE *and* GRANNY *appear.*

WIFE : I will go with you. (*To the* DETECTIVE.) Take me along with him, please !

[*The* DETECTIVE, *paying no attention to her, picks up a book and a box containing letters, to use as evidence. He then leads the* HUSBAND *out. The* WIFE *weeps.* GRANNY *runs about in terror. The* FRIEND *walks back and forth, frowning.*

FRIEND : It is so unjust ! At last your husband's time for accounting has come. It means the end of your new-found happiness.

WIFE : I am prepared for it—my husband warned me. But I tell you it is unjust ! Isn't there something you could do to help him ? I am helpless.

FRIEND : That beast of a detective ! He made such uncalled-for remarks ! Talking about your husband's visiting geisha-houses ! What if he does ?

WIFE : There's nothing to that. He went to those places in search of one of his students who disappeared the other day. And

the accusation that he is mixed up with another man's wife—that is horrid gossip ! If I were he I would speak up and explain everything ; but he won't—he remains silent. And that is why everyone suspects him.

FRIEND : It is all too silly even to speak of ; that is why he was silent. But you must believe in him from the bottom of your heart ! He is such a lonely man ! And he is always suffering from the thought of things that no one else can even imagine.

WIFE : Yes ; I realise that I was wrong. I do understand him in my heart, and I don't know why I talk back to him like a stupid child.

FRIEND : That box the detective took with him—did it contain your husband's diary or any letters from other members of the association ?

WIFE : Yes, it did ! What can we do about it ?

FRIEND : Don't worry, at any rate. But—there is somebody on the front porch.

WIFE : I believe there is. (*To* GRANNY.) You had better go and see who it is.

GRANNY (*hesitating*) : I ? Do you think I will understand what they want ?

WIFE : Hurry ! There are a number of them.

FRIEND : I will go and see.

[*He goes out and returns presently with two* STUDENTS. *The latter salute the* WIFE *coldly.*

FIRST STUDENT : Is the Professor at home ?

WIFE : No ; he has just gone out.

FIRST STUDENT : Oh, is that so ? (*To* SECOND STUDENT.) What shall we do ?

SECOND STUDENT : We had better tell her. (*To the* WIFE.) We have been appointed by our class to deliver a very unpleasant message. At a recent meeting the class voted to demand a certain explanation from the Professor.

WIFE (*with growing concern*) : What is it about ?

FIRST STUDENT : I think it would be better to wait until the Professor comes back before you speak.

SECOND STUDENT : Do you know where he went ?

WIFE : No ; I don't. (*She breathes heavily.*)

SECOND STUDENT : We cannot reconcile what the Professor teaches us with what he himself practises. That is why we wish an explanation from him.

FRIEND : It may be none of my affair, but it seems to me wrong to discuss this matter with his wife. I am an intimate friend of your teacher, and I shall listen to what you have to say. What do you mean by saying that his teaching and his practice are in conflict ?

FIRST STUDENT : Let's go now and return when we can see the Professor.

SECOND STUDENT : No ; it's better to wait here for him. (*To the* FRIEND.) In answer to your question I shall speak plainly. He has had an affair with a woman. That is contrary to his teaching.

FRIEND : If you have evidence to support that statement you can settle everything right now without waiting for him. You can pass any resolution you like.

FIRST STUDENT : Well, we have no absolute evidence. That is why we came here to question him.

FRIEND : Then on what ground do you make such a charge against him ?

SECOND STUDENT : Haven't you read last night's paper yet ?

FRIEND : Yes, I saw it. And so you believe in the newspaper rather than in your teacher ! I think I have seen you here before —both of you. You are the ones who were so eager to call him teacher. Now, on the strength of a newspaper and some idle gossip, you turn suddenly against him.

FIRST STUDENT : But we want to hear from his own lips . . .

FRIEND : That is obvious. What kind of student group do you belong to anyway ? If you were really devoted to him you would come to him in a decent manner. Bah ! You have no love nor any real understanding of him !

SECOND STUDENT : If he has not inspired us with love and understanding, that is his fault.

FRIEND : Then if he has no influence over you, why are you so excited about him ? You had better drop this disgusting hypocrisy.

[*Another* STUDENT *enters.*

THIRD STUDENT : What is the matter ? The Professor is not here, is he ?

FIRST AND SECOND STUDENTS : No ; he isn't.

THIRD STUDENT : Of course not. He is arrested.

[FIRST AND SECOND STUDENTS *show amazement.*

SECOND STUDENT : So that's the reason, eh ? Well, there is nothing we can do for him, then. We will make a report on the subject.

ALL THREE STUDENTS : Sorry to have bothered you.

[*They leave. The* WIFE's *breathing has grown heavier and heavier.*

FRIEND : Is anything the matter, madam ?

WIFE : Yes ; it is so hot !—I am nearly suffocated !

FRIEND : Ts ! Ts ! Ts ! Too bad ! But don't you worry about him. It's all idle gossip. You must guard your own health. Be calm ! I think I had better go for the doctor. (*To* GRANNY.) What are you standing there like a block of wood for ? Why don't you get the bed ready for her ? Well, I'll be back soon. (*He starts out, then comes back.*) Granny, don't let anyone in while I am gone.

[*He leaves. The* WIFE *weeps on* GRANNY's *shoulder.*

GRANNY : Don't cry like that, madam. It makes me sad. Be strong ! Life is like this. (*She prays.*) O Lord, forgive him who has sinned against Thee. Amen !

WIFE : I am sure my husband has done nothing wrong, aren't you ?

GRANNY : I hope he hasn't, madam.

WIFE : Aren't you sure ?

GRANNY : Of course he is a good man, but since he has come to disbelieve in God. . . .

WIFE : You doubt him ? You, too ? If you do, then leave this house at once ! I will have nothing to do with you ! I am going to the police station this minute !

GRANNY : No, no ! Don't do that ! In your condition it would kill you !

WIFE : I am not going to die ! (*She looks with hate at* DEATH, *where he sits at the back of the stage.*) I am not going to die ! I will not die until I have proved my husband innocent ! (*She looks again at* DEATH, *but this time with fright.*) Give me a lantern !

[*One of the* MEN IN BLACK *enters carrying a lantern.* GRANNY *takes it from him and prevents the* WIFE *from getting it.*

WIFE : Quick ! quick ! Give it to me, I say !

GRANNY : If I give it to you, you will go out. I mustn't let you have it !

[*The* WIFE *chases* GRANNY, *her breath coming hard and fast. The stage goes gradually dark.*

WIFE (*calling in the darkness*) : Give it to me, quick, I tell you ! Oh, oh ! (*She cries out in pain.*) I can't breathe ! Give me a light ! . . .

SLOW CURTAIN.

SCENE III

The setting is the same as for Scene I. Dawn of a summer morning. The WIFE *awakens and looks wonderingly about her. Her breathing is very hard. The* HUSBAND *stands beside her bed.*

HUSBAND : There is nothing wrong with the lanterns. (*He points to the lanterns which hang from the roof.*) They have burnt out, but it is getting daylight now, so it doesn't matter.

WIFE : When did you come back ?

HUSBAND : I have not been away. You must have been dreaming. You were talking in your sleep about lanterns and lights.

WIFE : Oh, I have had a terrible dream ! Is it morning yet ?

HUSBAND : Yes, the dreadful night is almost over. But you slept fairly well ; the night must have passed quickly for you. Since you went to sleep I have had the Nurse change the ice-packs twice. You didn't know anything about it. And now don't you feel better after such a good sleep ?

WIFE : If I had slept without dreaming, I might have rested.—Oh, I am so worn out !—You had better stay away from me ; I am breathing so hard. I am suffocating !

[*The* HUSBAND *moves a little away from her. The* WIFE'S *breath comes more and more violently, and she writhes with pain.* Take away the ice-packs !—My chest—off my chest !

[*The* HUSBAND *goes to her side, but she motions him away.* No, no !—I am suffocating ! Oxygen ! Give me oxygen !

HUSBAND : Of course ! Of course ! I was forgetting that. (*Goes to the* NURSE'S *room and calls.*) Nurse ! Say, Nurse ! (*To himself.*) Ts ! Ts ! Ts ! (*Calling again.*) Nurse !

NURSE (*from within, in a startled, unnaturally loud voice*) : Yes, sir ! You want ice ?

HUSBAND : Her breathing is worse. Give her oxygen !

NURSE : Yes, sir ! (*She speaks in a loud voice, but is half-asleep, and does not rise at once.*)

HUSBAND : Come right away ! (*He goes toward the kitchen and calls.*) Granny ! Granny ! It is morning.

GRANNY (*from within*) : Yes, sir. I am already awake. I will get up right away.

[*The* HUSBAND *begins straightening up the room. He takes down the lanterns. The* NURSE *appears in her night-dress, goes to the kitchen and comes back with the oxygen tank.* GRANNY *returns with her.*

WIFE : Be careful !—Be careful !—Oh, it is so hot !—A fan !——

[*The* HUSBAND *fans her. Then the* WIFE *takes the fan from him and fans herself. The* NURSE *administers the oxygen. Meanwhile the* HUSBAND *goes and throws open the outer doors. He then writes three telegrams in great haste. He calls* GRANNY *quietly to one side.*

GRANNY : She looks as though she were getting worse.

HUSBAND : Yes, I am afraid so. And that . . . (*The clock strikes five.*) Is it five o'clock ? (*He takes out his watch and consults it.*) That clock is seven minutes fast. It is exactly seven minutes to five. The telegraph office doesn't open until six, but when it opens I want you to get these telegrams off at once. And have plenty of hot water ready. (*He returns to the bed and speaks to the* NURSE.) How is she now—any better ?

NURSE : Yes ; her breathing is easier. (*To the* WIFE.) Shall I stop it now ? (*The* WIFE *nods assent.*) We can give you some more after a while. (*They stop the flow of oxygen.*)

WIFE (*to the* HUSBAND) : Let the Nurse . . . let her stay here. . . . You get . . . some rest. Nurse . . . don't . . . don't come too close . . . to me. Oh . . . so hot . . . I am . . . so hot !

HUSBAND : All right. I will go and get some sleep. And if you feel easier now, you had better go back to sleep, too. Be calm and sleep.

[*The* HUSBAND *goes into his own room. After a few moments the* NURSE *begins to doze. The* WIFE, *turning from side to side, calls to the* NURSE.

WIFE : Nurse !

NURSE (*wakening suddenly and opening her eyes wide*) : Yes, madam !

WIFE : My children's picture . . . there is my . . . my

children's picture. Bring it . . . here to me . . . so I can see it.

[*The* NURSE *gets up and crosses the room to the picture, takes it and looks at it. She then brings it to the* WIFE *and puts it down beside her.*

NURSE : Aren't they lovely ? All three of them boys, and all of them wishing for you to get well soon.

[*The* NURSE *begins to doze again.* GRANNY *can be heard in the kitchen, singing hymns in a low voice. The* NURSE *falls over on the floor, sound asleep. The* WIFE *looks at the picture and weeps.*

WIFE (*calling to her* HUSBAND) : Dearest !

HUSBAND (*promptly*) : Yes, what is it ? (*He comes out of his room.*)

WIFE : After all . . . you had better . . . better stay here . . . with me . . . and . . . let the Nurse . . . go away.

HUSBAND : Nurse ! Look here ! Go on back to your room. (*The* NURSE *gets to her feet.*) And by the way, did you telephone last night for some apples, as I asked you to ?

NURSE : No, sir ; it was too late. I thought I would order them this morning.

HUSBAND : Then see that you do it right away.

NURSE : Yes, sir. (*Looking at the clock.*) Shall I give her her medicine now ?

WIFE : No ; I don't want it.

HUSBAND : I think you should take it, though. We must be as careful as we possibly can.

WIFE : All right, then. I will take it.

[*The* NURSE *gives her the medicine.*

NURSE : Now then, your temperature. . . .

HUSBAND : Never mind. I will do that. You go along and do the telephoning.

[*The* NURSE *goes out, meeting* GRANNY, *who enters.*

I will take your temperature myself this morning. Do you feel very hot ?

WIFE : Yes.

HUSBAND : Let me see. (*Puts the thermometer in her mouth.*)

NURSE (*from the adjoining room*) : Granny, you go to the neighbour's and order some apples.

GRANNY : I certainly will not ! You are supposed to do that. (*Indicating the* HUSBAND *with her thumb.*) Is he in bad humour to-day ?

NURSE : Yes ; and I am getting sick and tired of this mess.

GRANNY (*pointing toward the* WIFE) : If she weren't in such bad shape he wouldn't be so mean. When she isn't well he is cross with everyone. What do you think about her ?

NURSE : No hope. It is a pity, too.

GRANNY : No hope for her ? Oh, I am so sorry !

NURSE : Well, I'd better get over to the neighbour's.

[*The* NURSE *leaves.* GRANNY *tidies the room a bit. She looks into a small box belonging to the* NURSE, *then at some postcards. Presently she goes out.*

WIFE : Did you . . . take . . . the children . . . to the dentist ?

HUSBAND : Yes. I took the oldest one yesterday morning. I expected him to cry at the pain, but he didn't ; he took it very bravely. Now then it's time. (*He takes the thermometer out.*) Let me see—ninety-eight. Why, you haven't any fever. (*A pause.*) The dentist used an electrical apparatus on him. That surprised him ; he had never seen anything like that before. He said, " There goes an automobile in my mouth ! " The dentist and everyone laughed. (*Another pause.*) Your breathing is easier now, isn't it ? . . . That's splendid. You are perspiring, too. I'll wipe it off. (*Silence again for a moment. He looks out into the garden.*) Ah, what beautiful morning-glories are opening up ! (*He goes into the garden and returns with two pots of morning-glories which he brings to the bedside of the* WIFE.) Aren't they beautiful ? (*Another moment of silence.*) " Like the memory of a frail and ancient dream, fading so fast—Thou Morning-glory ! . . . " You wrote that poem. Do you remember ?

WIFE (*after a pause*) : Like a dream—yes.

HUSBAND (*catching her meaning, but pretending not to, and looking at the flower*) : Yes indeed !

WIFE : Dear. . . .

HUSBAND : Yes ?

WIFE : I want to ask you one thing—just one thing.

HUSBAND : What is it ?

WIFE : I . . . I . . . it was right for me to put my absolute trust in you, wasn't it ?

HUSBAND (*reassuringly*) : Why, certainly ! I can say so without the slightest hesitation. It is true that I had a great secret battle with the weaker side of my nature, but in the end I achieved victory, and I am proud of that. You can put your trust in me without fear, and for my part, I am thankful that I can love you so deeply. We have been very happy together.

WIFE : I am so glad ! Now . . . I can die any time.

HUSBAND : You are more alive in my heart than you ever have been. I feel, somehow, as though I have absorbed your heart. If I should lose you now, just when I have become so truly your husband, I could never bear it. You must get well ! Do you understand ? (*The* WIFE *nods.*) There is a strain of evil in my blood. Since our marriage I have been tempted by many women, and sometimes I thought that Fate would bind me to one of them, but always I fought it out alone, saying nothing to you, and I won the battles, one after the other, although I spilled my heart's blood. And each time I was victorious I realised more clearly your love for me and mine for you. That gave me new power, new courage. Eiko, I have no regret for the lonely way we two have gone together. Do you understand me ? Our lives have not been in vain. We have known the strength of love, of union. Do you understand ? (*The* WIFE *nods.*) We should give thanks for that. I am very proud—proud ; although my heart is humble.

WIFE : Heaven has nothing in store for me now ! I am so happy I am crying ! Even though I die, I live in you !

HUSBAND : Yes, you are one who shall live after death. But even so, your body must not die now.

WIFE : I will live as long as I can . . . as long as I can. I will

be brave.—There is nothing more that I can say. (*After a moment of silence.*) My feet are getting so cold ! Put the hot-water bottle on them . . . get the doctor ! (*She closes her eyes and breathes rapidly.*)

HUSBAND : Nurse ! Nurse !

[GRANNY *comes running from the kitchen.*

GRANNY : The Nurse has gone to the neighbour's and hasn't come back yet. She's the slowest . . .

HUSBAND (*interrupting*) : Never mind about her ! You fill the hot-water bottle quick, and tell the Nurse—Oh, she isn't here, eh ?—I want her to go to the hospital. Run and get her. I'll fix the hot-water bottle myself.

GRANNY : Wait just a minute till I heat the water.

HUSBAND : You old fool ! Didn't I tell you to have the water hot ? (*He feels the* WIFE's *feet.*) Cold ! She was complaining of being too hot, and now her feet are as cold as ice ! Granny, haven't you any hot water in the tea-kettle ?

GRANNY : There may be a little in the tea-pot. (*She goes to the kitchen and returns with a teapot and the hot-water bottle.*) There is some in this one. (*She starts pouring the water from the teapot to the hot-water bottle.*)

HUSBAND : What's the use of putting such a little water in that big bag ? Let me have it. You go on to the neighbour's.

GRANNY : What shall I tell them ?

HUSBAND : Ts ! Ts ! Ts ! Call the Nurse, you fool !

GRANNY : O, yes, of course. All right. I'm going.

[*She goes. The* HUSBAND *takes a medicine bottle, empties its contents into the garden, fills the bottle with hot water from the teapot, wraps his handkerchief around the bottle, and holds it to his* WIFE's *feet. He watches her face anxiously.*

HUSBAND : What can be the matter ? Why don't they come back ! Eiko, are you cold ?

WIFE (*opening her eyes and looking about her in surprise, motions feebly for him to go away*) : Oh . . . so heavy . . . can't breathe ! Stay . . . farther away . . . Take everything away . . . everything. Move everything . . . away. . . .

HUSBAND : This ?

WIFE : Everything . . . everything !

[*The* HUSBAND *takes the pots of morning-glories and throws them into the garden. Moves everything else from around the bed into the kitchen. . . . The* NURSE *and* GRANNY *return together.*

HUSBAND : Nurse, hurry to the hospital and tell them to send someone at once !

NURSE : How is she now ? (*She tries to feel the* WIFE'S *pulse.*)

HUSBAND : The doctor can tell better than you can. Go at once !

NURSE : Whom shall I tell them to send ?

HUSBAND : Oh, you damned . . . anyone ! anyone ! Granny, what about that hot water ?

GRANNY : Yes, sir ! Yes, sir ! Right away !

[*The* NURSE *and* GRANNY *go out.*

WIFE (*opening her eyes again*) : Everything . . . even the *kakemono** . . . Clean everything out of the room.

HUSBAND : Yes, I understand. (*He moves everything into the kitchen. As he is about to take away the children's picture the* WIFE *looks up.*)

WIFE : Don't ! Not that ! (*She stares at the* HUSBAND *in terror.*) And then . . . you and . . . no ! You alone . . . stay . . . stay here . . . Oh, so cold !

HUSBAND : She will bring the hot-water bottle soon. And your father and mother will be here presently. You must be calm and steady. You understand ?

WIFE (*shaking her head*) : Darling . . .

HUSBAND : I shall stay right here with you, my dear. Don't worry.

[*The* PHYSICIAN *enters. He greets them hastily and proceeds at once to give the* WIFE *another injection.*

PHYSICIAN (*to the* HUSBAND) : Did you send the telegrams ?

HUSBAND : Yes ; they should be on their way by now.

PHYSICIAN : I doubt if she will live more than two hours.

HUSBAND : You must keep her alive until her parents come . . .

* Decorative wall hangings.

PHYSICIAN : The injection will do that. However. . . . (*He feels the* WIFE's *pulse.*) It is very irregular. (*He examines her finger-nails.*)

WIFE (*opening her eyes*) : Just you alone . . . stay here. Only . . . you . . .

PHYSICIAN : I shall step into the other room.

HUSBAND : Well then—will you see about the hot water ?

PHYSICIAN : Yes, I will do that.

[*He goes into another room. The* WIFE *opens her eyes again and looks affectionately around the room.* GRANNY *enters with the hot-water bottle. She takes in the situation, and nodding her head understandingly, retires at once. The* PHYSICIAN *is getting a verbal report from the* NURSE *and is writing it down.* GRANNY *re-enters and goes to the* PHYSICIAN.

GRANNY : Doctor, just now I saw my mistress looking tenderly around the room. That is what people always do when they are about to die. I feel so sad . . . I don't know what I can say. . . . She was such a kind lady. . . .

[*The* HUSBAND, *watching the* WIFE, *hears* GRANNY's *words, and wipes the tears from his eyes. The stage goes dark.*

DARK CHANGE OF SCENE.

SCENE IV

This scene represents the WIFE'S *dream. The stage is set as for the Prologue and Scene II, and becomes visible slowly. The little light burning in the centre of the stage, behind which sits* DEATH, *fades out gradually during the progress of the scene. Two children, one about five, the other about three, are playing on the floor. Near them, in a cradle, is a sleeping infant. The* WIFE *is seen busily at work.*

WIFE (*to the* CHILDREN) : I am through with my work now. Come over here to me. You have been good children, playing together. Now ! (*She takes each child into her arms by turn and kisses them.*) Ah ! your kisses are so sweet ! You have been eating candy, and it is all around your mouth. (*She wipes the child's mouth with a towel.*) And now it is time for Baby to have her milk, so you wait right here a little while. (*She prepares the baby's milk.*)

ELDEST CHILD : Mama, hasn't papa come back yet ?

WIFE : No, but he will come soon. You play with Granny until he comes. I am afraid it's too cold for you to play outside. (*Calls.*) Granny !

[*One of the* MEN IN BLACK *enters, bringing* GRANNY. (*To* GRANNY.) If it is not too cold, I wish you would take them into the garden to play.

GRANNY : Very well, madam. Come, children !

[*The two older* CHILDREN *go out with her.*

WIFE (*giving the baby its milk*) : There you are ! Isn't it good ? What eyes ! Now then—smile !

[*The* SECOND STUDENT *enters.*

SECOND STUDENT : I went there, madam, and they asked me to thank you.

WIFE : So ? And how is Mr. Shimota feeling ?

SECOND STUDENT : Not very well. His mother is almost worn out nursing him.

WIFE : I am sorry.

SECOND STUDENT : Where shall I put the tray and the cloths ?

WIFE : Oh, just put them on the shelf there.

SECOND STUDENT (*going to the shelf*) : How long has his wife been dead ?

WIFE : A year—no, more than that—about two years.

SECOND STUDENT : He contracted tuberculosis from his wife, didn't he ? But even now he studies until two o'clock in the morning, and the next day suffers from hæmorrhages. During the day, when he is at school, he has to lie down in the rest-room between classes. But his lectures are wonderfully brilliant. Unfortunately, when he speaks, the spittal flies clear across his desk and on to the students in the front row. They are rather frightened by it. And it really is serious from a hygienic standpoint.

WIFE : Yes, if he were teaching my children, I should be worried about it. But of course, when we look at it from his point of view, we must be sympathetic with him. His mother is old, and his wife died leaving two children behind her. If his salary were to be cut off, that would be the end of him. Whenever he calls here he tells us that one doctor examined him and can find no symptoms, and that another doctor has discovered Pirquet's reaction, but that doesn't prove anything. He is always insisting that his illness is not of an infectious nature, but he does that to soothe his conscience. I am sorry for him. He is so studious, and is such a good teacher to have in the high school.

SECOND STUDENT : It is a pity. There are many unjust things in life. When you think of them all, your husband seems very fortunate by comparison.

WIFE : You are right. And we are grateful, too. My husband always says the same thing.

SECOND STUDENT : But I—it is more than five years now since I accused your husband, and we tried to drive him out of the school. When I think of it now, cold chills run down my back. In spite of it all, he allows me to live here in your house. I often feel ashamed, for I think he suffered a great deal over that.

WIFE : No ; he didn't take it so hard. I was the one who worried. It was silly of me, but . . . I did take it too much to heart.

SECOND STUDENT : I cannot find words to express how sorry I am !

WIFE : Not at all. It was a good lesson for me. I ought to thank you for it—that is really true. And you have had your lesson, also, haven't you ?

SECOND STUDENT : Indeed I have ! I shall never forget how he acted through it all.

WIFE : What do you mean ?

SECOND STUDENT : Well, after we had returned to the other students and reported your husband's arrest, we came to the conclusion that his theories of individual freedom and so forth could be interpreted to approve of adultery, and that he himself actually practised it. This, we decided, was dangerous to society, and in opposition to the ideals of the government of Japan. We therefore passed a resolution condemning him. Shortly afterward, he resigned his position. Immediately many more students lost faith in him. They thought he lacked the courage of his convictions, and that he should protest and fight to retain his place. They accused him of being one of those who advance theories merely to attract attention. But there was one thing none of us could ignore : that is, that after the final cross-examination he was dismissed for lack of evidence. As a result we lost all grounds on which we based our condemnation of him. But what I cannot understand yet is why he made no defence of himself.—Are you chilly ?

WIFE : Yes, I am getting chilly. I wonder if the children are all right outdoors ?

SECOND STUDENT : I am sure they are. All children are children of the wind. The open air won't hurt them. (*Returning to his story.*) Then my conscience began to trouble me, so I came up here to see him.

WIFE : That's the way it was, eh ? At that time I was just about to have my first child.

SECOND STUDENT : Yes ; I remember. That was so.

[*A sudden noise outside. The* HUSBAND *enters, playing with the children.*

WIFE AND SECOND STUDENT : Here you are !

HUSBAND : Yes, here I am. It is snowing outside, and these two youngsters were playing in the snow like puppies.

WIFE : Where is Granny ? What has become of her ?

HUSBAND : She is in the Servants' room, shrivelled up with the cold.

WIFE : But I told her to look after the children !

HUSBAND (*setting down a sack of vegetables which he has been carrying*) : These potatoes and onions will last us a while. I had a terrible time getting them out of the ground ; the snow is so deep. (*To the* SECOND STUDENT.) I have been spreading fertilizer over the entire garden.

SECOND STUDENT : Don't you think it is rather early for that ? It would be better to wait until the snow melts.

HUSBAND : I doubt if it makes very much difference. Come, children ! (*He opens his arms ; the children run to him ; he dusts the snow off them and takes them in his arms.*)

WIFE (*to the* HUSBAND) : You have snow all over you. (*She dusts it off his shoulders.*)

HUSBAND : How is the baby ? Is he asleep ? (*To the other children.*) Now then, that's enough. You run along to Granny and ask her to bake some of these potatoes. They are splendid ones.

[*The* CHILDREN *take the potatoes, and calling* " GRANNY ! GRANNY ! " *run out of the room.*

SECOND STUDENT (*to the* WIFE) : Now that he is here you can ask him about what I was telling you.

HUSBAND : About what ?

SECOND STUDENT : Your confession.

HUSBAND (*becoming gloomy*) : Once is enough. Don't open that old wound. Eiko, I met Shimota's mother on my way. She was stumbling along through the snow, carrying a little child on her back. She said she was on her way to the hospital for some medicine. And she was very thankful for what you sent her. I told her I could spare her some potatoes, too, so you had better send Granny with them.

SECOND STUDENT : Professor . . .

HUSBAND : Don't call me by that title any more ! For five years I have been a farmer.

SECOND STUDENT : But what am I to call you, then ?—Shall I

tell your wife how I happened to come under your care ? She doesn't know that yet.

HUSBAND : Women always have curiosity, so you may as well tell her. I am going to read. (*He goes to the table.*) Eiko, here is a notebook ; is it yours ? (*He picks up and shows a blue notebook.*)

WIFE : Yes, that is mine. (*She takes it from him hurriedly.*)

HUSBAND : Ah ! so it contains your secrets, eh ? If you leave it lying around I may read it. You never can tell.

WIFE (*laughingly*) : Yes, you might. (*She puts it away on the shelf.*)

[*The* HUSBAND *begins reading. The* WIFE *and the* SECOND STUDENT *converse. The* WIFE *meanwhile is putting away the tray and cloths which are on the shelf.*

SECOND STUDENT : Well, you know it is my nature to be frank, so I asked your husband to his face why he had not made some defence of himself. To my surprise he answered that he had no defence to make. This was a great disappointment to me, for I had come here with one hope—it was then that he made his confession. It is very hard for me to tell you, but—well, after he married you he had several secret love affairs. You know that, do you ? And one of them was very serious ; it was with a married woman. To make a long story short, he wandered one night, as though led by Fate, to her house.

WIFE : But in the end he overcame temptation.

SECOND STUDENT : Yes ; he did.

WIFE : In that case, he has a good defence.

SECOND STUDENT : Not in his estimation. He believes what Christ said : " . . . that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And he applied that to himself.

HUSBAND : Not exactly. That was not my reason. (*He is now walking back and forth across the room.*) Before you came, I had won over temptation time and again, but the evil strain in my blood had not been wiped out, so I could not be sure of myself in the future. I could not tell when I might fall ; therefore there was nothing for me to do but keep silent. The reason I took into my

house that student who was expelled from school was that I sympathised with one who had a weak nature like my own. I thought that by showing him kindness I should be able to help him. But I was wrong. He got worse and worse.

SECOND STUDENT : At any rate you inspired me with what you did for him. You may think I exaggerate, but I felt inspired. You are so noble ! You forgive your enemies.

HUSBAND : You may call yourself my enemy, if you like, but at the same time you are my friend—and a very valued friend. Oh, well, we will go on improving ourselves a little at a time, and helping each other grow better. There is nothing in the world more worth doing than proving definitely the possibilities of human life for good.

SECOND STUDENT : How true !

HUSBAND (*to the* WIFE) : Now do you understand why I could not defend myself ? It was for the good of the students that I resigned my position. I was dangerous to them—more dangerous than Shimota's disease.

SECOND STUDENT : Please don't talk that way any longer ! It hurts me. (*Changing the subject.*) Isn't there something I could be doing ?

HUSBAND : No ; nothing. Oh, by the way, when you go to your room, take this sack to Granny. And you might take a look at the mailbox.

[*The* SECOND STUDENT *goes out.*

What did you send the Shimotas to-day ?

WIFE : Just some things I gathered up—and some of that medicine they wanted, and that they think is so good.

HUSBAND : Well, if they think it will do any good perhaps it will. Speaking of that medicine, do you remember when we came down here from Tokyo on our honeymoon ?

WIFE : Yes ; I remember. That is when father gave me that medicine. He said it was good for everything. I took too much, and had an awful headache and nosebleed.

HUSBAND : Another thing.

WIFE : What was that ?

HUSBAND : There was a couple got on the train at Kuchian. The wife got sick ; you saw her, and took the medicine from your bosom. . . .

WIFE : Did I ?

HUSBAND : Yes, you did. I was watching you. Then you took some yourself, and put the rest back in your bosom.

WIFE : Yes ; I remember now.

HUSBAND : Then you brought it out, took some more, and put it back again. Do you remember that ? You kept doing it. You didn't really want so much of it, but you enjoyed showing off.

WIFE : That's not true !

HUSBAND : Oh, yes it is ! And when the train was nearing Sapporo, and the woman was feeling all right, and was getting ready to leave the train, you went over to her and insisted that she take some of the medicine. She didn't want it at all, but she took it anyway, wrapped it in a paper, and put it in her sash.

WIFE : That is not true !

HUSBAND : You are not as green as that now. Why, that story has become one of our family anecdotes. Well, anyway, we have gone through some trying times together, haven't we ?

[*The* SECOND STUDENT *re-enters. He hands a letter to the* HUSBAND.

Talk of a person and his shadow appears ! This is from your father. (*Opening the letter and glancing over it.*) I can't tell you how many times I have felt like smashing up our home. And I know you have had dark periods, too.

WIFE : No, I haven't.

HUSBAND : Don't deny it. Deep down in your woman's heart there is, as with all women, a desire for luxury that at times must have hidden your love for me. In all women, even in the most modest girl, there is reborn from time to time a hatred of man—a hatred inherited from Eve. I know you have tried hard to overcome this, for you have a strong will. (*Returning to the contents of the letter.*) He says it is very cold in Tokyo now. All our relatives are well. Your mother will soon be changing to her floss-silk cap. (*Reading.*) " The flowers have dropped their petals and gone to

seed, and we, too, ripen slowly into old age." Father has become quite reconciled to us. (*Handing the letter to the* WIFE.) Did you send the regular allowance to the family this month ?

WIFE : Yes ; I did. (*Reading the letter.*) He is such a good old man ! Whenever I think of father's smiling face, life grows brighter.

HUSBAND : At heart he is a noble man. He and I used to quarrel over nothing, but nowadays I long to see him again. He used to be so stubborn ! Lately, though, he has come to have some confidence in my judgment, and that naturally pleases me. I wish him a long life, and I am sorry for the worry I caused him, though I couldn't help it.

WIFE : What a strange post-script !

HUSBAND : I didn't read it. What does it say ?

WIFE (*reading*) : " P.S. As I am growing old, I have made my last will and placed it in care of your mother. When I die, you and she can open it and read it together." Isn't that peculiar ?

HUSBAND : Did he write that ?

WIFE : Yes. (*After a moment of silence.*) I, too, have made my last will.

HUSBAND : What ? How silly !

WIFE : You can't tell when a person may die.

HUSBAND : Of all the absurd things I have ever heard ! I wish you wouldn't talk such nonsense.

WIFE : Yes. Now please sit down in a chair and listen to me quietly. I shall read it to you. (*During the reading that follows, one of the* MEN IN BLACK *appears and moves piece by piece all the furniture from the room.*) " I want to write you a letter, but if I write it now I know I shall express thoughts and feelings which will bring sadness to you and other members of the family, and I do not want to make you sadder than you are already. I have worried over this for some time. If I keep everything to myself I am terribly lonely ; if I write you a letter I make you unhappy ; therefore I am writing in this book, which you may read after I . . . (*She looks at* DEATH, *frightened.*) . . . I die. But do not feel sorry for me ; save your sorrow and your tears for the children and parents I leave behind

me. (*She turns her gaze toward* DEATH *again.*) Death is creeping toward me. You may not hear him, but I can hear his footsteps. Yet I am not sorry for myself. You are always telling me that I lack courage for life, but I do not think so. Death comes to everyone, sooner or later, and I know he is coming to me now. I am sorry for all your sakes. (*She looks again at* DEATH.) At least I do not fear Death. I am shedding no tears as I write this. Of course I regret that I have never accomplished anything good in life, but to meet Death does not frighten or sadden me. Already I am so ill that you can say I am alive, but that is all. And I think it is better for me to die than to live on in such a helpless condition. If I could ever get well, then . . . but that is hopeless now. For ten days I have thought of Death, and now I get pleasure from it. I think of Death as I would of a lover.—I am sorry to die without seeing you achieve success, but I hope and believe that you will achieve it in spite of everything. I want to ask all of you to look after my three children. You must not think they will be weak because of my sickness. The power of thought is very great, as I have always said, so you must think the children will be strong, like their father. Still, you must not neglect them when they are sick. My eternal wish is to make my children strong, and that I will do ! I don't want anyone to see me die ; I want to die quietly, alone. If there are others watching me it will make my suffering that much worse. I know it is considered natural for one to wish for relatives at the bedside when one is dying, but I am not that way. And do not let the children know of my death ; do not let them come to the funeral ; no unpleasant experience must come to their pure little hearts. Take them away somewhere during the funeral ; keep on telling them I am ill until they are old enough to understand what death is. And now, I am thankful from the bottom of my heart to you, who have educated me, guided me, and loved me, when I have been so unworthy, so undeserving. It has been the one pride of my life to possess you for my husband. That pride makes me willing to die in loneliness. I never expected to die this way, and I weep for you and the children whom I leave behind me." (*She bursts into tears, throws the book from her, and moves*

toward her HUSBAND.) At last my heart is so pure that I can look into Paradise !

HUSBAND : What was the matter with you ? Did you write all those things seriously ?

WIFE : It is fate ! The time has come for us to part forever ! Your smiles and mine have vanished now !

HUSBAND : I am lost ! I don't know what to say.

WIFE : Not only our smiles, but our warm house, our children, Granny, the students, our friends—they have all gone. I can see them no longer. Look ! The wide wilderness !

HUSBAND : How desolate it is !

WIFE : There is nothing to be seen, is there ?

HUSBAND : Desolate !

WIFE : Only the cold, cold snow is falling !

[*One of the* MEN IN BLACK *enters carrying a basket heaped with artificial snow, which he scatters about the stage. He goes out. More paper snow falls from above. The* HUSBAND *and* WIFE *embrace.*

I will sleep on your warm breast. Oh, let me see my children !

[*The* MAN IN BLACK *enters bringing the* THREE CHILDREN. How cold it is ! Come, now, to me. You, and you, and you ! (*She draws all three of them to her.*) I will keep you warm. But I am so helpless ; I am suffering myself. I don't even know what I can do for you—you poor children. (*She looks around and sees the little light which burns in front of* DEATH.) Ah ! There is my light burning ! I will keep you and father warm as long as that light is burning ! Did you see that terrible man sitting there ? Don't look at him ! He will not harm you. (*Speaking to the* HUSBAND.) You must not look at him either, dear. (*Guarding her children, she goes to the light and holds her hands over it.*)

HUSBAND : Isn't the flame almost out ?

WIFE : When it is out, then I shall be dead.

HUSBAND : Who is there ? (*He points at* DEATH.)

WIFE : I have been looking at him a long time, so I am not afraid of him. But you mustn't look at him. Ah, now the flame is

dying ! The cold, cold darkness is coming ! You must flee from here with the children !

HUSBAND : You come, too. I can't go without you !

WIFE : I wish I could, but now I cannot. (*She weeps.*) Hurry, now ! Go !

[*The* MAN IN BLACK *appears and drives the* HUSBAND *and the* CHILDREN *away from the light. The* HUSBAND *struggles as he goes out. The* WIFE *looks after them a long while.*

(*Throwing a kiss after them.*) They are gone. (*She weeps.*)

[*The clock strikes seven. The* MEN IN BLACK *appear and surround the* WIFE.

DEATH (*holding high in his left hand an hour-glass*) : There is still a little sand left. Be patient !

[*The* WIFE, *hearing this voice, is overcome with fright, and falls on to the flame. The stage is plunged in darkness.*

SLOW CURTAIN.

SCENE V

The setting is the same as for SCENES I *and* III. *It is seven minutes before seven o'clock in the morning. The* WIFE *is lying quietly in her bed. The* HUSBAND *is feeling her pulse. He watches her face anxiously. In an adjoining room the* PHYSICIAN *and the* NURSE *are seated comfortably, reading magazines.*

HUSBAND (*in a low tone*) : Eiko ! What are you staring at ? (*He becomes suddenly frightened, starts to call the* PHYSICIAN, *but changes his mind, calms himself, and passes his hand back and forth in front of the* WIFE'S *eyes. Her eyelids do not close. He is startled.*) Eiko ! Eiko !

[*The* PHYSICIAN *and the* NURSE *close their magazines and rise.*

Doctor !

[*The* PHYSICIAN *and the* NURSE *enter the sickroom.*

Her eyelids do not move ! You had better feel her pulse. (*The* PHYSICIAN *does so.*) Now her eyelids close. Has she still any pulse ?

PHYSICIAN : No longer. Nurse, get the water ready.

[*The* NURSE *goes to the kitchen and returns with a cup of water and a pair of chopsticks. Between the tips of the chopsticks she fixes a bit of cotton.*

NURSE : Give her the water with this.

[*The* HUSBAND *takes the cup and chopsticks and wets the* WIFE'S *lips with the cotton which he has dipped in water.** GRANNY *enters crying.*

HUSBAND : There's no use crying. Be calm. . . . You give her water also.

GRANNY : Yes, master, but I can't help crying ! (*She weeps loudly.*)

HUSBAND : Sh ! Be quiet, be quiet ! Ah, she moved a little then. O God, save her !

PHYSICIAN : I am very sorry, but she has gone. (*He places the stethoscope to her breast, then turns to the* HUSBAND *and speaks softly.*) I am very sorry.

* A Japanese ceremonial custom on the occasion of death. It is an expression of sympathy for the dying person, and is performed by relatives and friends.

HUSBAND (*nods*) : . . .

PHYSICIAN (*looking at his watch*) : It is just seven o'clock.

NURSE (*looking at her watch*) : Yes ; exactly.

[*The* PHYSICIAN *and* NURSE *then wet the* WIFE'S *lips in turn.*

GRANNY : Madam, you have gone to heaven at last. I will soon follow after you, and will meet you there. (*She wets the* WIFE'S *lips.*) Amen !

[*There is silence for a while.*

PHYSICIAN (*to the* NURSE) : Do everything you can to help him. If you need anything, come to the hospital. As soon as I get there I will send a rickshaw man over. (*To the* HUSBAND.) I understand how you feel, but this is the thing we cannot help. You will excuse me if I leave now ?

HUSBAND : Thank you, Doctor, for doing your best. I will see you later on.

PHYSICIAN (*going to the door*) : Is there anything I can do for you on my way ?

HUSBAND : Yes. I wish you would send some telegrams for me —to my parents and my wife's parents.

PHYSICIAN : Very well ; I will. Shall I say the usual thing ?

HUSBAND : Yes, just—— : " Eiko passed away quietly at seven o'clock this morning."

PHYSICIAN : All right.

[*He goes out. The* NURSE *and* GRANNY *mumble a few conventional words of condolence to the* HUSBAND.

HUSBAND : Thank you both for your kind attendance. Sometimes she scolded and was rude to you, but I wish you would forgive her that. I will thank you for her for that forgiveness.

NURSE : Not at all !

GRANNY : Not at all, master !

HUSBAND (*to the* NURSE) : What is the next thing to do ?

NURSE : We will have to wash the body.

HUSBAND : Then I shall leave that to you two.

[*The two women leave the room. The* HUSBAND *lightly kisses the dead* WIFE'S *forehead. The women return, prepared to wash*

the body. The HUSBAND *wipes the face himself, then rises, goes to the shelf and takes down the blue notebook. He goes out onto the porch, looks sadly at the sky and the garden, sits on the edge of the porch, opens the notebook and starts to read. Presently he turns back and sees that the women are combing the* WIFE'S *hair.*

Granny, please cut off a little of her hair and save it for me.

GRANNY : Very well, sir. She had such beautiful hair !

[*The sound of the scissors cutting the hair reaches the* HUSBAND. *He shrinks as though his own flesh were being cut.* GRANNY *places the shorn hair on a piece of white paper and carries it to the* HUSBAND.

Where shall I put it, master ?

HUSBAND : Leave it right here.

GRANNY : Here on the porch ?

HUSBAND : Yes.

[*There is silence for a while, then the lively voice of the grocer is heard from the kitchen.* GRANNY *goes out, and returns in a moment with a tray of apples.*

GRANNY : Master, the apples we ordered this morning have come.

HUSBAND : Oh ! Put them beside the head of my wife's bed.

[*The* NURSE *and* GRANNY *work silently at the body. The* HUSBAND *continues to read the notebook. Suddenly he bursts into tears. Then he takes up the lock of hair from the paper and presses it to his forehead as though he were offering a silent prayer.*

SLOW CURTAIN.

EPILOGUE

The setting is the same as for the Prologue, except that the little light in centre has burned out. The stage is dark at first, and grows light gradually. Around DEATH *are grouped many* MEN IN BLACK. *They are all bent over. The stage slowly goes back to darkness. From the darkness* DEATH *speaks.*

DEATH : The little flame has been extinguished without mercy. Have you fastened the lock, which is never, never to be opened ?

[*The sound of weeping is heard, and continues through the remainder of the scene.*

Mankind passes on, as ever, swiftly, aimlessly, unheedingly. (*Silence.*) The sorrow of the Husband and parents soon will cease. (*Silence.*) It is right that the Husband should suffer longer than the others. Let him suffer so. Soon he shall see his father die. Is the lock ready and the key fitted ? They are not rusted ? (*Silence.*) Prepare for that ! (*After a dreadful silence.*) All is the same, now and forever !

SLOW CURTAIN.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

A COMEDY
in Three Acts
by
SANEATSU MUSHAKOJI
(Authorized Translation)

CHARACTERS

SHUZO YAMADA, *a self-contained, strong-willed, but kind-hearted man of* 55.

HIROKO, *his wife, a conventional woman of* 50.

TARO, *their elder son, a clever, warm-hearted young man of* 28.

JIRO, *their younger son, much like his brother, but extremely opinionated,* 22.

TOSHIKO, *their daughter, a well-bred girl of* 17.

OBAYASHI, *friend to Jiro, and, though only* 23 *years old, the head of a wealthy family.*

FUJI SHIGEKI, *a beautiful girl of* 18, *maid-servant to the Yamada family.*

ANOTHER MAID-SERVANT *to the same family.*

PLACE : *Tokyo.*

TIME : *The Present.*

ACT I

A living-room in the Yamada home, luxuriously furnished in Western style. HIROKO *and* SHUZO *discovered.*

HIROKO : Are you going out again ?

SHUZO : Yes ; I have to go out again. By the way, where have the children disappeared to ? There isn't one of them around.

HIROKO : They have gone to the concert. The three of them went together.

SHUZO : I see. How fine it is they are so congenial.

HIROKO : Yes, isn't it ? And they are so good, too. But, you know, I am losing my hold on them.

SHUZO : Well, perhaps so. They are grown up.

HIROKO : First you grew indifferent to me. Then the children. It makes me very sad.

SHUZO : Next it will be the grandchildren.

HIROKO : I suppose so. We had better find a wife for Taro.

SHUZO : I have been thinking about that. I thought of Kawanaka's daughter, Tsuneko.

HIROKO : Tsuneko ! Impossible ! Taro is always saying how much he dislikes her.

SHUZO : The conceited rascal ! Living off his parents, and then expecting to have his own way.

HIROKO : You did the same thing, though, when you were young.

SHUZO : But I was working hard, and made myself much more useful than he does.

HIROKO : Taro would work, too, if it were necessary.

SHUZO : You think he would ?

HIROKO : Of course. He is cleverer than you.

SHUZO : I doubt that. But he isn't exactly a fool.

HIROKO : Far from it. I can't manage him.

SHUZO : You are the one that's the fool.

HIROKO : Just the same, I can manage you.

SHUZO : That is because I am in love with you.

HIROKO : Anyway, Tsuneko is out of the question.

SHUZO : Maybe so. Perhaps she isn't good-looking enough to attract a young fellow. But do you have anyone else in mind ?

HIROKO : Yes, I have.

SHUZO : Who is it ?

HIROKO : I was thinking of Ishiyama's daughter, Takiko.

SHUZO : Oh ! Well, Taro certainly could have no objection to her.

HIROKO : Have *you ?*

SHUZO : No ; I have no objection to her. But it would be better for us if he would marry the other girl.

HIROKO : Ah !

SHUZO : However, if that is the way things stand, we will agree on Takiko.

HIROKO : Then I shall tell Taro as soon as he comes home.

SHUZO : Yes ; do that. It ought to please him.

[*Enter* FUJI, *the maid.*

FUJI : The car is waiting, sir.

SHUZO : All right.

[*Exit* FUJI.

HIROKO : What time will you be back ?

SHUZO : About one o'clock.

HIROKO : You are out late every night.

SHUZO : Yes ; I am in a constant state of apology to you. But it is all for the sake of the family, you know.

HIROKO : Well, if you say so, I suppose it must be.

[*They leave the room together. After a moment* HIROKO *returns. She busies herself tidying things. Presently footsteps are heard without ; then a knock at the door.*

Come in.

[*Enter* TARO, JIRO, *and* TOSHIKO. *The three of them speak at once :* " *Here we are !* " *They greet their mother.*

Did you have a good time ?

TOSHIKO : Yes, mother.

[*They all start out of the room.*

HIROKO : Just a minute, Taro ; I have something to talk over with you.

TARO : All right. I have something to talk over with you, too.

[TOSHIKO *and* JIRO *leave.*

HIROKO : What is it that you want to say ?

TARO : What is it *you* want to say, mother ?

HIROKO : You speak first.

TARO : No ; you, mother.

HIROKO : Maybe we both want to say the same thing.

TARO : You think so ? Oh, if we do, then I shall be very glad.

HIROKO : I think we do.

TARO : I doubt it.

HIROKO : Well, then, what is it *you* want to say ?

TARO : What do *you*, mother ?

HIROKO : I'll tell you the first letter in the word. It begins with " M." You know, Taro, that you have arrived at the age for . . .

TARO : Mine is different. It begins with " T."

HIROKO : What does it stand for ?

TARO : Yours stands for marriage, I suppose, mother.

HIROKO : Yes, you guessed right. And yours—does it mean that, too ?

TARO : Something quite different.

HIROKO : Well, anyway, you have come to the age when you must hear what I have to say about your marriage.

TARO : Of course I will hear what you have to say, mother. But before I get married I want to travel, to go abroad.

HIROKO : Abroad !

TARO : Yes ; for about three years.

HIROKO : Three years !

TARO : Only three years.

HIROKO : *Only* three years ! Why, you will be thirty-one in three years, and Takiko will be twenty-four.

TARO : Takiko ? You mean to say you want me to marry Takiko. I don't care whether she will be twenty-four, or thirty, or fifty.

HIROKO : Then you don't want to marry Takiko ?

TARO : Of course not.

HIROKO : But why not ?

TARO : It is not a question of " why," mother. I simply don't like her.

HIROKO : Well, then, what do you say to Tsuneko ?

TARO : Who is she ?

HIROKO : Kawanaka's daughter.

TARO : Why, she isn't the kind of woman I could marry.

HIROKO : But your father wants you to marry her.

TARO : How foolish !

HIROKO : You call your father foolish ?

TARO : If that is his idea, he certainly is a fool. But what I want to know is, can I go abroad ?

HIROKO : Well, we shall see. Why do you want to go ?

TARO : To-night at the concert the thought came to me that I must go abroad. I want to hear Kubelik, and Paderewski, and . . .

HIROKO : What good would that do you ?

TARO : The same good it does father to go to his club.

HIROKO : But your father has to go around among people on account of his business.

TARO : Yes ; to make money. Is that the only reason ?

HIROKO : Of course.

TARO : Maybe so. Well then, it would do me the same good it does you to go to the theatre.

HIROKO : If that is your reason, then we shan't agree to your going.

TARO : Why ?

HIROKO : Because I have time for such things, and you haven't. You have to get started at your life work.

TARO : But isn't that why father makes money, so we can enjoy ourselves ?

HIROKO : Not so at all.

TARO : Then why does he make it ?

HIROKO : I don't know.

TARO : You don't know ? I'll tell you. These days a man makes money in order that his children may be free and happy—that they may enjoy life. Don't you think so, Mother ?

HIROKO : I don't know.

TARO : Maybe father doesn't know, either. But otherwise there's no sense in making money. I don't believe in piling up

family fortunes to be handed down generation after generation. I want to put father's money to some good purpose. Money that burdens its owners is worse than none. It should be used to buy happiness.

HIROKO : I don't understand what you are talking about. But I will talk the matter over with your father and let you know what he says. And your marriage must be settled before you leave.

TARO : I will marry when I come back. I can't marry before I am thirty.

HIROKO : Why not ?

TARO : It is against the law.

HIROKO : That's strange. There are plenty of people who marry at twenty-two or twenty-three.

TARO : Oh, those people aren't really married. Of course they are from a legal point of view, but everything is settled for them by their parents, and that doesn't make a real marriage. There can be no real marriage under the age of thirty.*

HIROKO : I can't understand you.

TARO : It is better that you can't understand me. But at any rate my marriage can wait until I have been abroad.

HIROKO : I couldn't bear it if you were to marry some foreign girl.

TARO : I shan't marry any foreign girl. Not because you couldn't bear it, but because she couldn't stand being exiled in a family like this.

HIROKO : I don't understand you at all.

TARO : Yes, mother, you understand me ; what you don't understand is law, and human nature.

HIROKO : What is the matter with you ? You say such strange things !

TARO : There is nothing the matter with me. Let me go abroad, where I can see more and learn more.

HIROKO : You are sure it will be for only three years ?

*In Japan a man cannot marry without his parents' consent until he is thirty. If he wishes to marry a woman to whom his parents object, it is therefore necessary that he wait until he attains that age.

TARO : Yes ; I will come back when I am thirty.

HIROKO : Well, I will see what your father says.

[*A knock at the door.*

Come in.

[*Enter* FUJI, *who hands a card to* HIROKO.

FUJI : Someone to see you, madam.

HIROKO : Very well.

[*Exit* HIROKO. FUJI *smiles at* TARO.

TARO : Fuji !

FUJI : Yes ?

TARO : I am going abroad very soon.

FUJI : Really ?

TARO : Don't be surprised. I shall be back in three years, a great man.

FUJI : You will be gone three years !

TARO : Yes, I shall have to be gone three years. If I were to stay here, you would have to die.

FUJI : Why ?

TARO (*embracing her*) : Because you are such a darling ! *

CURTAIN.

* Taro means here to imply that his affection for Fuji is so great that, were he to stay near her, he might easily become involved with her in a desperate love affair ending in *shinju*, or double suicide, a common solution of such dilemmas in Japan. The practice of *shinju* has its origin in a Buddhist belief that suicide from noble motives insures happiness in the next world.

ACT II

ACT II

Jiro's room, furnished in Western style. Jiro *is at the desk, writing. He stops to read aloud what he has written.*

Jiro : " Dear Brother : Thanks for your letters. I wish I could go abroad too, but father will not consent to it—at least not until you come back. I can't accomplish anything lately ; my mind runs off in every direction. There is nothing to write to-day. Everyone is well. (*His voice trembles slightly.*) I enclose Fuji's letter as usual. You will find everything in it. She is always waiting for your letters, and each time I hand one to her, her face lights up."

[*He folds his letter, and places it, with another already sealed, in an envelope, which he seals in turn. There is a knock at the door.*

Who is there ?

Fuji (*outside*) : Here is a letter for you.

Jiro : Come in.

[Fuji *enters and hands him a letter.*

Is it from brother ?

Fuji : Yes.

[Jiro *opens the letter, takes from it a smaller one which is sealed, and gives the letter to* Fuji, *who bows politely.*

Did you send the letter I gave you a while ago ?

Jiro : No ; it is still here. (*Shows her the envelope.*)

Fuji : I have something to add to it.

Jiro : I will answer this letter to-night ; you can send a note with it.

Fuji : But I said in my other letter that I was worried at not hearing from him. I want to change that.

Jiro : At not hearing from him ? For how long ?

Fuji : It has been about a week.

Jiro : Well, you had better not change what you said. It will make him understand how you felt. And you can write him again to-morrow anyway.

Fuji : All right, sir. To-morrow then, if you say so.

Jiro : You can write to-night.

Fuji : Yes, sir.

[*Exit* FUJI. JIRO *watches her go, sighs, and looks at the letter he has just received. Another knock at the door.*

JIRO : Who is it ?

HIROKO (*outside*) : It is your mother.

JIRO : Come right in, mother.

[HIROKO *enters and seats herself on a chair beside* JIRO. I have a letter from brother.

HIROKO : Is that so ? What does he say ?

JIRO : He says he is well. He mentions that he had been to see an art exhibition. He asks about everyone and sends his regards.

HIROKO : I am glad he writes to you so often. He thinks about home a great deal, away off there in a foreign country.

JIRO : It looks that way.

HIROKO : Jiro, I want to talk with you about something.

JIRO : So ?

HIROKO : I discussed it with your father yesterday.

JIRO : Yes ?

HIROKO : I understand Fuji comes to your room very often lately, and that you spend a great deal of time in conversation with her. The servants are gossiping. I want you to be careful. There must be no false rumours.

JIRO : Are there any such rumours ?

HIROKO : Of course I don't believe anything wrong of you, but there is some foundation for the rumour, I am sure. I dislike having to speak of it to you, but if anything were to happen, it would be irremediable.

JIRO : Oh, if that is what you mean, why, everything is all right.

HIROKO : You are sure everything is all right ?

JIRO : Absolutely.

HIROKO : You are both young, and you can't tell what might happen. I am therefore going to dismiss Fuji.

JIRO : Dismiss her !

HIROKO : Yes.

JIRO : If you do that, she is sure to become a geisha girl.

HIROKO : Yes, I suppose she will.

JIRO : Then I shall object to having her dismissed.

HIROKO : If you do, you will be subject to suspicion.

JIRO : I can't help that.

HIROKO : Good heavens ! It is true, then ! I must get rid of her at once. Surely you can see that.

[HIROKO, *in anger, starts from the room, but* JIRO *stops her.*

JIRO : Just a minute, mother.

HIROKO : I don't care to hear anything more.

[*She tries again to leave the room, but* JIRO *seizes her by the arm and prevents her.*

JIRO : Mother, if you wish to dismiss her, all right. I can't help it. I never cared about seeing her anyway. But I don't want her to be driven into the life of a geisha girl. You and father saved her from that fate once, and Fuji has always been grateful to you for it. At least you can protect her with money.

HIROKO : Why, Jiro, you are crying ! Then—the rumour is true !

JIRO : Maybe it is true, and maybe it isn't. It doesn't matter anyway. But I can't stand for her becoming a geisha. She must be kept pure until she becomes a wife.

HIROKO : Well, that can be done, I think. But you must neither see her nor correspond with her.

JIRO : If she can be protected I promise not to see her or correspond with her.

HIROKO : You are sure ?

JIRO : Mother, do you doubt me ? If I thought you didn't trust me I wouldn't care what I did.

HIROKO : I do trust you. I do trust you. I will dismiss Fuji to-day.

JIRO : Very well. But I must see her once before she leaves.

HIROKO : You can see her in my presence.

JIRO : No ; that would not do.

HIROKO : Then I shall not allow you to see her at all.

JIRO : Very well, then—I shall correspond with her.

HIROKO : If you dare !

JIRO : Mother !

HIROKO : You disobedient son !

JIRO : If I have to be disobedient, I will be. You, mother, are unreasonable, and if I listened to you any longer I should become unreasonable myself.

[JIRO *starts to go.*

HIROKO : Where are you going ?

JIRO : To see Fuji.

HIROKO : Wait ! Wait ! Why are you going to see her ?

JIRO : I am going to give her some advice that may save her from the life of a geisha.

HIROKO : If that is all you have to say to her, you can do that here, before me.

JIRO : All right, I shall.

[*He rings the bell. In a moment there is a knock at the door.* Come in.

[*Enter* FUJI.

FUJI : What is it you wish, young master ?

JIRO : I have something to say to you.

FUJI : Yes, sir ?

JIRO : Don't mind my mother's being here. (FUJI *smiles.*) Ah, you are smiling now, and the one word I must say to you will change your smiles to tears.

FUJI : What !

JIRO : But it is all for your own good.

FUJI (*wonderingly*) : . . .

JIRO : Don't be frightened.

FUJI : . . .

JIRO : I am sure you will be the winner in the long run. If you are not, then I shall be your avenger.

FUJI : . . .

JIRO : Are you frightened ? I know that what I am saying sounds like nonsense to you, but nevertheless you must remember it. You must keep yourself pure until you become a wife. There will be many temptations for such a beautiful girl as you, but these you must overcome. If you don't, I shall never forgive you.

FUJI : Very well, sir.

JIRO : Now you will be surprised to hear that there is a ridicu-

lous misunderstanding about you and me, and my mother is very much worried over it. It all comes from our having seen each other and talked together so often lately. So, Fuji, I must tell you that you are . . .

HIROKO : Jiro !

JIRO : You tell her the rest, mother.

HIROKO : The fact is, Fuji, you must leave this place to-day.

[FUJI *looks astonished.*

It will make it very unpleasant for us if you stay any longer.

[FUJI *begins to cry.*

JIRO : Don't cry. You will be all the better off. I have talked matters over with mother, and you have no need to worry. You will not have to become a geisha girl. You will be happier away from such an annoying place as this, and you will be able to study and play, or do whatever you wish. You can fit yourself to be a splendid wife and mother. But we will not be allowed to write to each other. Now don't worry. Leave everything to me. Mother has given me her promise that she will protect you.

[FUJI *continues to sob.*

If you keep on crying like that, they will suspect me. And after all, there is nothing to cry about. You are leaving us, but think what we are : my father respects no one ; my mother is unreasonable ; I am always making you lots of hard work ; the other servants are continually bothering you. Why, you should thank me for being the cause of your dismissal.

FUJI : . . .

JIRO : I have caused you lots of work, and you have done everything well—so well that whoever takes your place cannot possibly prove as satisfactory. And I mean to give you a reward for your excellent service, although just now I have nothing to give you. By the way, did you mail the letter to my brother that I gave you ?

FUJI : Yes, sir, I mailed it.

JIRO : Very well. I hate to see you going away. You have been here a long time. (*To* HIROKO) : Mother, will you promise her in my presence that you will protect her ?

HIROKO : Yes, I promise. (*To* FUJI) : If your family ever gets so badly off that they feel it necessary to sell you for a geisha girl, you come to me and I will help you. You have been with us a long time ; I look upon you as a friend ; so come any time, without hesitation, and I will lend you money, even if it has to come out of my own savings.

FUJI : Indeed, I shall remember your kindness, madam.

HIROKO : And you must grow up to be a good woman, as Jiro says.

FUJI : Yes, madam.

HIROKO : And you must come to see us when you get married.

FUJI : Thank you very much.

HIROKO : If you keep straight I am sure you will have no difficulty in finding a good husband. Inside of three or four years you will change the style of your hair, and will come to see us with your child.

[*While these two are talking,* JIRO *writes something on a piece of paper without being observed. This paper he places in a book, slips the book into its case, and hands it to* FUJI.

JIRO : This is a small token of my appreciation of your services. Take it as a remembrance.

FUJI : Thank you, sir.

[*She bows very politely in spite of the fact that she is still weeping.*

JIRO : Well, mother, it is all over. I have kept my promise ; now you must keep yours. (*To* FUJI) : Good-bye, Fuji, and good luck to you. If you are ever near here, you must step in, even if we can't see each other.

HIROKO : Of course I shouldn't mind if you were to see each other occasionally, but it is the gossips that cause the trouble. Come Fuji, let us go now.

[FUJI *bows, looks intently at* JIRO, *then goes out with* HIROKO. JIRO *looks after her, and falls upon the table, weeping. After a time there is a knock at the door.* JIRO *wipes his eyes.*

JIRO : Come in.

[*Another* MAID *enters.*

MAID : Mr. Obayashi is here, sir.

JIRO : Is that so ?

[*The* MAID *goes out.* JIRO *rises to his feet, looks in a mirror, then follows her out of the room. In a moment he returns with* MR. OBAYASHI. *They sit down.*

OBAYASHI : Well, what's the news ?

JIRO : Do you know any ?

OBAYASHI : Nothing new.

JIRO : I do.

OBAYASHI : What ?

JIRO : Well . . .

OBAYASHI : Is it good news ?

JIRO : I am not sure whether it is good or bad.

OBAYASHI : What is it all about ?

JIRO : Something I was going to tell you before, but didn't.

OBAYASHI : I think I can guess what you mean.

JIRO : You might guess half of it.

OBAYASHI : Half of it, you say ?

JIRO : Yes. You have probably guessed that I love Fuji.

OBAYASHI : Yes. I guessed that.

JIRO : But you don't know that I have no right to love her.

OBAYASHI : I think I do know that, as well as the reason for it.

JIRO : You do ?

OBAYASHI : The reason is class difference.

JIRO : Not at all. If that were the reason, things would be easy.

OBAYASHI : Then, she is going to marry a *yoshi.**

JIRO : No. You are wrong again.

OBAYASHI : Then Fuji loves someone else.

JIRO : That is about it.

OBAYASHI : That is terrible, isn't it ?

* In case a Japanese family has no male issue, the eldest daughter is often required to marry a man who is adopted into the family as a son in order that the family name may be preserved. Such a man gives up his own family name and assumes that of his wife. *Yoshi* is the term used to designate any man who marries in this way.

JIRO : It is even more terrible.

OBAYASHI : What do you mean ?

JIRO : I mean that I am in the confidence of each of them. They trust me to help them.

OBAYASHI : How awful !

JIRO : Call it awful or what you like, but it is worse than that. To have to pretend indifference to the one I love !

OBAYASHI : Who is the man ? Is he a good sort of fellow ?

JIRO : He is too near to me for me to say. He is my brother !

OBAYASHI : What !

JIRO : Isn't it terrible ! I was in love with Fuji before my brother confessed to me his love for her. I was afraid of him because I felt he was my rival. When I heard he was going abroad, I was happy, although my conscience hurt me. I thought that with him out of the way, Fuji would be mine. I waited anxiously for him to go. I remember very well the night he made up his mind definitely to leave. It was a moonlit night. He came to my room and said he wanted me to do him a favour. I asked him what it was. He said, " Do you know that I am going abroad ? " I replied that I knew how fond he was of music, and that he longed to go where he could hear the great musicians—Ysaye, Kubelik, Paderewski. But he said that this was only his excuse ; the real reason for his going was that he was afraid to stay here. This surprised me, and I asked him why. At first he hesitated, but finally (you see, my brother trusted me absolutely—even more than you do) he said : " If I stay here a month or two longer, I may bring tragedy into Fuji's life. We are in love with each other. We can't trust ourselves to be together. At any moment something may happen and we will yield to our passion. If she were to become pregnant, and father and mother should not consent to our marriage (as I know they would not consent), I would not be able to support her, for I have not been trained to support myself ; and it would end in tragedy for us both. That is what I am afraid of. That is why I am running away for three years. At the end of that time I shall be thirty years old, and can marry her legally. Fuji is still young, and during these

three years I shall train myself to make a living. Now you understand why I am going abroad." As he finished speaking, he burst into tears, overcome with his emotion. I wept with him. But I did not weep out of sympathy for him : rather out of sympathy for myself. Then he asked me to take care of Fuji, as he would not dare write to her directly. I was to act as a go-between. This I agreed to, and he thanked me for it, thinking, of course, that it would be an easy thing for me to do. But I saw how warm and strong their love was—how pure and beautiful, and I decided at last to sacrifice myself. Since that time I have felt that it is a sin for me to love her, and yet I cannot help it. Knowing that my love is destined never to be fulfilled is far more painful than my brother's suffering at being parted from her.

OBAYASHI : Well. . . .

JIRO : And just now my mother came in and told me that the servants are gossiping about Fuji and me because they see us talking together so much. My mother herself suspected us. But of course it is only natural that we should be suspected. That is what makes it so hard. We are dismissing Fuji.

OBAYASHI : Hm !

JIRO : It is very dangerous for me to be around her, but it will be terribly lonesome when she is gone. Now I realise how my brother must have felt when he left Fuji and went abroad.

[*There is a knock at the door.*

Who is it ?

FUJI (*outside*) : It is Fuji.

JIRO : Come right in.

[*Enter* FUJI *with coffee service. She bows to* OBAYASHI, *then speaks to* JIRO.

FUJI : Young master, I am going to leave to-morrow morning. Your father came home just now, and he said it would be too sudden to have me go at once, and it would be all right to wait until to-morrow. You have been so good to me ! I shall never forget your kindness, sir.

JIRO : Then I shall be able to see you again ?

FUJI : Yes, sir.

JIRO : Let me know what your address is. And you will find my brother's address written on a slip of paper in the book I gave you. However, I shall address four or five envelopes for you to use.

[FUJI *blushes at this.*

FUJI : Your father also said that he would help look after me, and find a good place for me to live.

JIRO : He did, eh ? Well, you needn't worry, anyway.

FUJI (*starting to leave*) : Thank you, sir.

JIRO : Tell Toshi-chan that Mr. Obayashi is here.

FUJI : Yes, sir.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III

The same as ACT I. SHUZO *is alone, seated in a rocking-chair. He is smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper. There is a knock at the door.*

SHUZO : Come in.

[*Enter* HIROKO.

HIROKO : What is it you wish ?

[*She seats herself on a chair near him.*

SHUZO (*still reading the paper*) : I want to talk over something with you.

HIROKO : Is it something very important ?

SHUZO : Not especially so. It is about Jiro.

HIROKO : About Jiro ! Oh ! that frightens me.

SHUZO : Why should you be frightened ? (*Puts down the newspaper.*)

HIROKO : He is capable of doing such alarming things.

SHUZO : Oh, he is not so rash as all that.

HIROKO : No ; he isn't exactly rash, but if he made up his mind to do a certain thing, he would do it even at the expense of his life.

SHUZO : You are right. But he is a very interesting boy. He will be a great man some day, if he doesn't get switched off on the wrong track.

HIROKO : And he has no regard whatever for his home and family.

SHUZO : That is true. Heaven knows he pays no attention to me. He thinks I am old and stupid, and that I want everything my own way.

HIROKO : Now, I doubt if he thinks that.

SHUZO : Oh, yes, he does. He has a stronger will than I have, and he has more brains, too. He is a deep one. We get on his nerves, and he pities us.

HIROKO : Do you really think so ?

SHUZO : Certainly. Now I am a self-made man and had to fight my way up in the world, but Jiro has always been taken care of, and has led an easy life. That is why I cannot understand how he comes to be so strong-willed.

HIROKO : Somehow he has changed a great deal since Taro went abroad.

SHUZO : He has seemed to me very gloomy lately, and very obstinate.

HIROKO : Don't you think he will get over that when Taro comes back.

SHUZO : No ; I don't think he will. He will dominate Taro. Taro has strong passions, but his will is weaker than Jiro's. I doubt if Taro is capable of anything more dangerous than falling prey to women.

HIROKO : You class women as a danger, do you ?

SHUZO : I was only joking. At any rate, Taro will be all right. He isn't foolish.

HIROKO : I don't like that kind of joking.

SHUZO : Well, what I want to tell you about Jiro has to do with Fuji.

HIROKO : With Fuji ? Surely not !

SHUZO : You think not ? Then listen. To-day Fuji's father came to see me, and told me that Fuji had refused to marry the man her family had chosen for her. I think Jiro is behind this. I heard, also, that about two weeks ago, Jiro went to Fuji's house to see her.

HIROKO : Did her father tell you that ?

SHUZO : No ; he didn't tell me that. You know what I think ? That he and Jiro are working together—that they have framed up against me. I tried to catch the old fellow by remarking that we appreciated the hospitable way in which he had received Jiro at his house. He said, " Not at all. We were surprised to have him drop in so unexpectedly." So much for that. I am certain, too, that about two weeks ago, when I was discussing Fuji's marriage with you, Jiro was listening on the sly. I thought so at the time, and that is why I asked you the next day where Jiro had gone. But you are so stupid you had no idea where he was.

HIROKO : And you are too clever for anything, of course.

SHUZO : I'm keeping a sharp eye on Jiro because I am more interested in his future than I am in Taro's.

HIROKO : Taro is the more dependable.

SHUZO : Maybe so. And I admit that if Jiro should succeed me as head of the family, things might all go to smash. But to finish my story. When I asked Ota, the man I sent to arrange Fuji's marriage, how her family took to the idea, he reported that they showed neither surprise nor interest. That means Jiro had been there first. Later on I remarked in Jiro's presence that Fuji had refused the marriage proposal, and I knew he was laughing up his sleeve at me, but I didn't want to have a scene with him just then, so I ignored it. The disobedient rascal ! And I thought he promised you he wouldn't go to see Fuji.

HIROKO : So he did promise.

SHUZO : You are sure ?

HIROKO : Certainly. He gave me his promise not to see her, on condition that I keep my promise to him.

SHUZO : That's interesting. I am going to cross-examine him, and I want you here as a witness. But remember that you are to be on the side of the prosecution, not the defence. He's a tough customer.

HIROKO : Very well.

[SHUZO *presses a button on the table and a* MAID *enters.*

SHUZO : Tell Jiro I wish to see him here.

MAID : Yes, sir.

[*Exit the* MAID.

SHUZO : He knows already that we are on his trail.

HIROKO : That doesn't seem very likely.

SHUZO : But he knows that Fuji's father has been here to see me.

[*A knock at the door.*

Who is it ?

JIRO (*outside*) : Jiro.

SHUZO : Come in.

[JIRO *enters calmly and sits on a chair near his mother.*

JIRO : What is it you want ?

SHUZO : Don't you know what I want ?

JIRO : Well, I think perhaps I do.

SHUZO : What makes you think so.

JIRO : Something I heard from Fuji's father. Besides, you are so sharp that I have to be sharp, too.

SHUZO : I have a number of things to say to you. But first of all, why did you interfere with Fuji's marriage ?

JIRO : I didn't go that far. I merely went to see her father.

SHUZO : To get him to interfere, eh ?

JIRO : Perhaps—though I have absolute confidence in Fuji. The point is, I knew that if her father tried to dictate to her, it would only cause trouble, so I went to win him over to her side.

SHUZO : That's a strange line of talk. What do you mean when you say you have absolute confidence in her ?

JIRO : Oh, you are not clever enough to understand that. Fuji is deeply in love with someone who is also in love with her. I knew that she would refuse this arranged marriage, and I wanted to make the refusal as easy for her as possible.

SHUZO : Who is it that is in love with her ?

JIRO : I can't tell you that.

SHUZO : It is not likely that it is you, is it ? (*Smiles.*) If it should be, you would both have to commit suicide.

JIRO : Do you really think it is I ? And do you really care as much as that about the family name, and the laws of conventionality ?

HIROKO : Jiro ! What are you saying ? How dare you ! Say that again !

JIRO : I can repeat it as often as you like. Would you drive apart two who are so deeply in love ? Of course I can't tell whether or not they would actually commit suicide. That is a matter of secondary importance, anyway. But you are really so afraid of conventional laws that you would drive them apart ?

HIROKO : Do you mean that you are not afraid of the criticism of society ?

JIRO : Not at all. I am afraid of it. But I am much more afraid of ruining human life.

HIROKO : What an unnatural child you are. You were born to disgrace your parents.

JIRO : No, mother. I think I was not born for that purpose,

though I admit I do not know why I was born. But certainly not for anything as easy as disgracing my parents. My task is more difficult than that.

HIROKO : Jiro, be still ! You are going too far.

JIRO : Mother !

HIROKO : I am shocked at you !

JIRO : Mother !

HIROKO : I am not your mother, and you are not my child. Go ahead—say what you please !

SHUZO (*to* HIROKO) : Be quiet ! Jiro didn't say that he wanted to marry Fuji. (*To* JIRO) : You don't know how sacred the family name is, nor how important public opinion is, and you don't frighten me by all that wild talk. I haven't the slightest use for the sort of man that kills himself for the sake of a woman. Now see here, Jiro. Isn't it true that when we discharged Fuji, you promised your mother that you would have no correspondence with her ?

JIRO : Yes, that is true. That is why I have had no correspondence with her.

SHUZO : You are sure you haven't ?

JIRO : Absolutely. Some day, two or three years from now, the man who will then be her husband will prove my innocence.

SHUZO : You had no correspondence. All right. But you also promised your mother that you would not go to see Fuji, either.

JIRO : Yes, I promised that.

SHUZO : But you did see her after all, didn't you ?

JIRO : Yes, I saw her.

SHUZO : Ah ! And why ?

JIRO : Well, I went to her home, and she was there, and I couldn't help meeting her. But I didn't go there with that purpose. I did not break the spirit of my promise to mother. If you still think I did, please forgive me.

SHUZO : I may forgive that. But you don't mind, do you, if Fuji becomes a geisha girl ?

JIRO : Father ! You are not going to punish Fuji because of my actions ! I had to make those promises to mother in order to convince her of my innocence. I ought never to have made them !

SHUZO : You are ready to accept your punishment ?

JIRO : If it is what I deserve.

SHUZO : Well then . . . you will never be Fuji's husband !

JIRO : Oh ! Why, I wouldn't be if you wanted me to. In the first place, Fuji doesn't want to marry me.

HIROKO : She doesn't ? You are not telling us that to clear yourself ?

JIRO : Mother, you are so suspicious !

SHUZO : You are sure she doesn't want to marry you ?

JIRO : Of course I am.

SHUZO : Absolutely certain ?

JIRO : Absolutely.

SHUZO : You have given me your word as a man.

JIRO : And you mistrust me like a woman.

SHUZO : You have been acting very strangely.

JIRO : How ?

SHUZO : First, you made a special trip to Fuji's house. Next, you concealed from us the name of the man who is in love with her. Finally, you got angry when I said you would be getting mixed up in a double-suicide.

JIRO : The first charge I think I have already explained to you. The second is made necessary by the fact that I have not the man's permission to reveal his identity. To the last accusation I will say that I got angry thinking how cruel you are, and how differently I should look at things if I were in your position. I pitied you, father and mother, for being so stupid as to worry over such a matter.

SHUZO : Do you still imagine that we will allow you to marry Fuji ?

JIRO : No. I never suspected you of being that liberal. But if I were in love with Fuji so desperately that I contemplated suicide, then I think you would allow me to marry her, because it would be better for you to make your son happy than to let him kill himself after a scandal.

HIROKO : You are trying to make fools of us.

JIRO : Yes ; I am.

HIROKO : You have no respect for your parents.

JIRO : I have always gone on the assumption that parents love their children.

HIROKO : No child talks back to his parents as you do.

JIRO : Perhaps not. But why worry over that ?

HIROKO : Father, why don't you do something to him ? He makes me angry !

JIRO : And you make me angry.

SHUZO : Jiro, you are amusing yourself at our expense just because you are clever. You are forgetting the beneficence of your parents.

JIRO : The beneficence of parents ! That should mean giving the child happiness. When a child grows up he doesn't love his parents any longer—he wants to run away from them. That is true in my case, but you are still trying to impose your beneficence on me, and it won't work.

HIROKO : A queer sort of child you are !

JIRO : Father ! Mother ! You don't understand what you are talking about. You know nothing of a young man's heart. These times are different from those of your own youth. And besides, a young tree doesn't want to stay in the shade of an old tree. A young tree wants the sunlight. It wants to brave the winds. Old people think life is made for suffering ; young people think it is made for enjoyment. To enjoy to the fullest one's own life ! to find one's own happiness—are not those words beautiful ?

SHUZO : But, Jiro, you must not forget self-sacrifice.

JIRO : I am not forgetting self-sacrifice. I would gladly sacrifice myself by my own will, but not by the will of others. If I were the man you suspected me of being, I am certain I should leave this house and run away with the girl. I would willingly disgrace my parents and become an outcast from society.

HIROKO : How dare you say such a thing ?

SHUZO (*to* HIROKO) : Be still. Jiro doesn't know what he is saying. But I believe him when he says he is not the man in question. (*To* JIRO) : Now that I am convinced you are not he, you may go. I have nothing more to say to you.

HIROKO : Do you believe him ?

[JIRO *bows his head and bursts into tears.*

What's the matter ? Are you ill ?

JIRO : Why should you care whether I am or not ? The doctor's bill wouldn't be much.

SHUZO : Jiro ! You are in love with Fuji after all ! You would die for her. I never saw you cry like this before.

JIRO : I often cry over little things. It is easier to cry than to worry. But let me alone. (*He pauses, then stands up.*) I want to cool my head.

[*He opens the door and goes out.* SHUZO *and* HIROKO *look after him. There is a silence. Then——*

HIROKO : Such trouble ! What are we going to do ?

SHUZO : After all, Jiro is our younger son. Maybe we will let him marry her. Anyway, don't worry about it.

[*There is another pause. Presently a knock comes at the door.* Who is it ?

TOSHIKO (*outside*) : Toshiko.

SHUZO : Come in.

[*Enter* TOSHIKO.

What is it ?

TOSHIKO : Nothing. Only Jiro was crying. What is the matter with him ?

SHUZO : You never mind about that. What is he doing ?

TOSHIKO : He is pacing up and down the hall in front of his room, and tearing his hair. I asked him what was the matter with him, but he said, " Nothing." Then I asked him what he had done. He told me to keep still, and then just stared at me. But it surprised me to see him crying, and I knew he had been in here talking with you a long time, so I came to find out about it.

HIROKO : Jiro says he often cries lately. Have you ever seen him crying ?

TOSHIKO : Yes, once before.

HIROKO : When was that ?

TOSHIKO : About three weeks ago, when I took him a letter from Taro.

HIROKO : By the way, it has been a long time since we heard from Taro. I wonder what can be the matter with him.

TOSHIKO : Didn't he say in the last letter that he wouldn't be able to write for a month or so ?

HIROKO : He is just pretending to be too busy. He doesn't want to bother. But he knows very well how we feel, and he should have written again before now.

TOSHIKO : Maybe he has something important to attend to.

HIROKO : But it is nearly two months since he wrote. And he is the one we can always depend on.

TOSHIKO : Mother, what has Jiro done ?

HIROKO : He hasn't done anything. Have you noticed any change in him ?

TOSHIKO : No ; I haven't noticed any change in him. When he isn't busy he acts all right toward me. Of course when he is busy working or thinking, and I ask him anything, he only stares at me.

HIROKO : Jiro is a very queer boy. I can't understand him.

[*During the preceding dialogue* SHUZO *has been thinking. Now he speaks suddenly to* HIROKO.

SHUZO : Say !

HIROKO : Well ?

SHUZO : I have thought of something—something terrible !

HIROKO : What is it ?

SHUZO : The man may be—Taro !

HIROKO : Oh ! If it should be, what would we do ?

SHUZO : We would be in a worse mess than ever. (*To* TOSHIKO) : You had better leave.

[*Exit* TOSHIKO.

I believe it is !

HIROKO : Surely not !

SHUZO : Perhaps not. But why, otherwise, should Jiro talk so strangely ? Taro stopped writing just about the time we sent him word of Fuji's dismissal. Before that he had written two or three times a week. In fact, I couldn't understand why he should write so often, but I supposed it was merely because the two boys were so fond of each other. Now I realise more than ever how peculiar

it was. And Jiro swore he would never correspond with Fuji, and that he would never marry her. I don't think he was lying.

HIROKO : Oh, if it is true, it is terrible !

SHUZO : It's a fine mess ! But now I think I can understand why Jiro spoke and acted as he did. For instance, his wanting to protect Fuji against being made a geisha girl. And what is more, I can now understand what Taro was saying before he went abroad.

HIROKO : Oh, if it should be true ! What shall we do ?

SHUZO : Quite right. What shall we do ?

HIROKO : Do you think they will commit suicide if we separate them ?

SHUZO : I don't think Taro is as foolish as that.

HIROKO : Then do you think it will ruin his health ?

SHUZO : I don't think so.

HIROKO : But he will hate us.

SHUZO : Yes ; I suppose he will. And Jiro will hate us, too.

HIROKO : Still, if we were to let Taro marry her, it would mean the disgrace of our house.

SHUZO : That is just it. We would be ashamed for the rest of our lives. (*He glances at the door and speaks in a lower tone.*) Jiro may be listening to us.

HIROKO : No, surely not !

SHUZO : You can't trust him.

JIRO (*outside the door*) : No ; you can't trust him. (*He opens the door and appears.*) I learned from Toshiko what was going on here, so I slipped up to the door and overheard everything.

SHUZO : . . . .

HIROKO : . . . .

JIRO : You were right when you guessed that Taro is the man ; but you were wrong about their relationship. You have no idea how deeply they are in love.

SHUZO : Never mind about that. I shall write to Taro and tell him that we know all about his affair with Fuji, and that we are very sorry, but we cannot countenance it.

JIRO : If you write him that, I shall write him this : " Father and mother are very happy over the affair, and everything has been

settled much easier than you expected." I swear I will do this. The thing has come to light through my carelessness, and I am responsible for its solution. Both of them trusted me, and I considered myself worthy of their trust. I shall therefore help them get married.

SHUZO : If you do what you threaten, I will drive you out of this house.

JIRO : I am ready to be driven out. I am ready to stand on my own feet. Obayashi will help me get started . . . I knew that when I told Taro and Fuji not to worry about me. When I cried a while ago, it was merely because I pitied you both so much.

[*There is an astonished silence on the part of the parents for a few moments, then—*

HIROKO : What kind of a child is this !

SHUZO : Even I am astonished !

JIRO : Death would be nothing to me. (*Tears start from his eyes.*)

SHUZO : I wish I could turn you out, but I haven't the courage. It is harder for a parent to lose his child than for a child to lose his parent.

HIROKO : There is still Toshiko. We still have her.

TOSHIKO (*outside*) : Mother ! (*Enters and continues*) : Mother, if Jiro is turned out, turn me out with him !

HIROKO : What kind of children are these !

SHUZO : I am helpless around people who know nothing of the world.

JIRO : Father, will you listen to me, and do something for me ?

SHUZO : I will consider it.

JIRO : Father, mother, I have one favour to ask of you.

SHUZO : What is it ?

JIRO : Will you permit Toshiko to marry Obayashi ?

SHUZO : I have been agreeable to that for a long time.

JIRO : And you, mother ?

HIROKO : I am willing.

JIRO : Thank you. (*To Toshiko*) : Toshiko, you had better telephone Obayashi at once.

[TOSHIKO *nods her head and goes out.*

SHUZO : Jiro, haven't you someone you want to marry ?

JIRO : I ? Not yet.

SHUZO : Then I shall find someone for you.

JIRO : All right.

SHUZO : You are in love with Fuji, aren't you ?

JIRO : I can't answer that.

SHUZO : Jiro, I will consent to anything you wish. You may write whatever you like to Taro. It will make him happy. And even if I lose the whole world, I won't lose you. I love you.

JIRO : Thank you, father. Taro and Fuji will be so happy ! And mother, don't you worry. If you do lose the respect of society, you will gain our love. Please forgive me everything I said to you before.

SHUZO : Jiro, you are not thinking about dying ?

JIRO : Far from it. I have something else to do.

[*He bows and goes out quietly.*

SHUZO (*to* HIROKO) : Don't worry any more. All your children have come back to you. I feel that I, too, am coming back to you. Year after next we shall see our first grandchild.

[HIROKO *looks up at* SHUZO. *They smile at each other.*

CURTAIN.

BURNING HER ALIVE

A PLAY

in One Act

by

SENZABURO SUDZUKI

(Authorized Translation)

CHARACTERS

YUNEN TSUMURA, *an artist, age* 45
KUNI TOMIYAMA, *his mistress, age* 26
MITSU YASUDA, *Yunen's daughter, age* 14
JUKICHI YASUDA, *Mitsu's uncle, age* 37
KWAYO KIMURA, *Yunen's private pupil, age* 25

TIME : *The Present*
PLACE : *Tokyo*

The SCENE *is a combination of interior and exterior. The main portion of the stage is raised somewhat, and represents Yunen's studio. From this a staircase leads to an upper storey. The remainder of the stage is taken up with the garden, which contains an oak tree, Chinese miscanthus, and various shrubs. Late afternoon sunlight lies upon the garden.*

YUNEN *is sketching from* KUNI, *his model, who is fastened by light chains to a pillar.* KUNI *is a large, attractive woman, with hair dressed* icho-kayashi* *style.* YUNEN *is badly in need of shaving.*

YUNEN : I don't like that pose ; it is too ordinary.

KUNI : Do you want to try it over again ?

YUNEN : Well . . . I don't like this. (*He puts down his charcoal and looks at* KUNI.) Turn your head up a bit.

KUNI : This way ? (*She lifts her head.*)

YUNEN : A little more . . . a little more. Lean back and show your chin and throat better. (*As she does so.*) There ! That's right.

KUNI : This is much easier ; but I am getting sleepy.

YUNEN : Don't go to sleep. Your head a little to the left now ! Oh ! . . . just . . . that will do.

KUNI : It would be easier for me if I could put my head a bit lower. Ouch ! These chains are cutting me.

YUNEN : Wait a while ; we'll soon be through.

[*He resumes his sketching. There is a pause.*

KUNI : Say, professor . . . .

YUNEN : Well ?

KUNI : You used to tie your wife up this way, didn't you ?

YUNEN : Yes.

KUNI : You are forever painting women in chains. You can't sell that kind of picture, can you ?

YUNEN : No.

KUNI : Then why do you keep on painting them ?

* A style of hair-dressing named from its resemblance to the leaves of the *icho* tree.

YUNEN : Because women look most charming when they are bound.

KUNI : Because they are helpless ?

YUNEN : No, not that. Whenever you think a women looks helpless—beware ! You are due for a surprise.

KUNI : Then why do you say women are so charming when they are bound ?

YUNEN : I can't say why ; but at any rate I can see them at their best that way. The tighter they are bound, the more beautiful they become. Even the homely ones are made attractive. And so are you, my dear.

KUNI : So you say.

[*There is another pause while he works.*

YUNEN : Raise your right knee a little higher. There !

KUNI : You used to chain your wife up this way, and then when you were through sketching you would do awful things to her.

YUNEN : Yes, awful.

KUNI : I heard all about that from Kwayo.

YUNEN : I have my suspicions of you and Kwayo.

KUNI (*with a guilty expression*) : Don't be silly ! . . . I'm getting tired. (*She lowers her knees.*)

YUNEN : Don't ! I am just working on that part now !

KUNI : But I am so tired !

YUNEN : Be patient a while. Move your right foot out a bit, and raise the left knee. A little more . . . a little more !

KUNI : But my legs will show !

YUNEN (*ignoring her protest*) : Grip your toes !

KUNI : Professor, cover up my legs ! I look awful this way !

YUNEN : Be quiet ! It's like the picture of Okuma coming out of the closet. Not bad at all !

KUNI (*laughing*) : You fool !

[YUNEN, *his eyes on his sketch, grins.*

I wish you would finish. (*Impatiently.*) Hurry up !

YUNEN : All right ; I'm quitting.

[*He crosses to* KUNI.

KUNI : Don't ! I'm tied up here ! Don't !

YUNEN : I'll let you loose, then. (*He loosens her chains.*)

KUNI : Stay away from me. There ! Did you hear the door open ? Perhaps it is Kwayo coming back.

YUNEN (*moving away from her*) : Damn !

[*A voice is heard off stage calling a greeting.*

KUNI : It isn't Kwayo. Someone else is coming.

[YUNEN *goes to the outside entrance and disappears.* KUNI *throws off the chains, looks after* YUNEN, *and goes upstairs.* YUNEN *returns with* MITSU *and* JUKICHI. MITSU *is an intelligent but rather pathetic looking girl.* JUKICHI'S *appearance is that of a country merchant. The three are exchanging greetings as they enter.*

YUNEN : You are quite a stranger, Jukichi.

JUKICHI : Yes, I am.

YUNEN : Is your wife well ?

JUKICHI : No ; that is why I am here.

YUNEN : Oh ! What's the trouble ?

JUKICHI : Well . . .

YUNEN : What's the matter with her ?

JUKICHI : You see, she has been sick in bed since spring.

YUNEN : That's too bad. But what ails her ?

JUKICHI : It's a case of infection.

YUNEN : Lungs ?

JUKICHI : Yes.

YUNEN : I didn't think she was the sort to get that.

JUKICHI : No ; she was always strong.—We're having a hard time of it now, though, and that is why I have come to talk with you about Mitsu here.

YUNEN : Hm-m-m !

JUKICHI (*speaking hesitantly*) : It is seven years since I took her in charge. She has got beyond the troublesome period, and is old enough to be sent out to work, but I hate to send her—she is my sister's child. My wife feels as I do about it. So . . . I have come to see you. . . .

YUNEN : I scarcely know what to say. This is too sudden. It is true she is my child, but since I gave her into your care she

has passed completely out of my life. She is like a stranger to me.

JUKICHI : A stranger, you say ? That is very cruel ! I never adopted her ; she was a pitiful little thing, and I felt sorry for her, so I took her home with me and raised her. And during these seven years you have never sent her a single gift—not even money to buy her shoes. We have often said jokingly that you must have forgotten you had a child ; but it is no longer a joking matter.—Of course it is a great inconvenience to us to let her go, for she is a great help around the house, but we simply must reduce the number of mouths to feed. Besides, my wife's sickness is infectious ; if the girl should become infected, I would be responsible to the memory of her dead mother, and to you.

YUNEN : It wouldn't be your fault.

JUKICHI : Don't be so cold-blooded. If such a thing were to happen, it would be irrevocable.

YUNEN : But the whole thing is so sudden ! You descend on me like this—I don't know what to do ! Take her back home with you for the present ; meanwhile I will get hold of some money to send you.

JUKICHI (*growing angry*) : I didn't come here to get money out of you.

YUNEN : But you said you were hard up.

JUKICHI : Yes, but I didn't ask for money.

YUNEN : Well, it amounts to the same thing.

JUKICHI : Nonsense ! Don't you understand ? My wife is having hæmorrhages, and the smell of medicine is all over the house. I can't afford to send her to a hospital. I have four children of my own—the oldest is the same age as Mitsu—and every night they have to sleep near their mother. But I can't help that ; they are my children ; they must stick to their poverty-stricken parents. With Mitsu here, it's different. You are a well-known artist, and though your conduct is questionable, you are making money, and are able to live here in the great city of Tokyo. This is your child ; yet if she contracts the disease, I am held responsible. Money is a secondary consideration with me ; my first duty is to safeguard

her life. And I can't tell how long my wife will live ; the doctor says maybe only this year, maybe three or four years. You never can tell about tuberculosis. What would you do if Mitsu were to go on living with us, and as a result, were to become infected ?

YUNEN : It wouldn't be your fault. Your own children take the same risk, so in any case, I couldn't blame you.

JUKICHI : Be reasonable ! This is your child. Your own child ! Don't you love her ?

YUNEN : No, I don't.

JUKICHI : Well, I am astonished !—But at least she could be of help in the kitchen. Why don't you let her do your housework ?

YUNEN : No ; I have someone else to do that. If I have this child around she will remind me of her mother, and that will be painful.

JUKICHI : Ah, yes ! She died from your mistreatment, and you don't care to be reminded of that.

YUNEN : At any rate, take the girl back home with you.

MITSU : Uncle, let's go home. I want to go right now ; I am worried about auntie.

JUKICHI : Last night when we talked this matter over, Mitsu and my wife disagreed with me, but I insisted she should come, for she is not as strong as the other girls, and I am afraid to have her around the sick-bed. Yet I hated to see her leave . . . and all the other children went to see us off at the station ; they were as sad as though she were their real sister. No doubt they would welcome her back.

YUNEN : That's good. It will relieve me, too. From the very first she was unlucky—being born my child. If you sell her for a waitress when she gets old enough, I shan't say anything.

JUKICHI : Have you gone crazy ?

YUNEN : Not at all ; I simply do not wish to take back the child who is possessed of the spirit of my dead wife.

JUKICHI : Why, you are inhuman ! I can hardly believe you!

YUNEN (*laughing*) : Is that so ?

MITSU : Uncle, let's go home !

JUKICHI : Yes, Mitsu, we had better go. And hereafter you may as well call me father. This man is no relation of yours.

YUNEN (*laughing cynically*) : Ha, ha, ha !

JUKICHI : Why are you laughing ?

YUNEN : Because it's so funny ! (*He laughs again.*)

JUKICHI : You . . . ! You . . . ! (*He starts toward* YUNEN *menacingly.*)

MITSU (*holding* JUKICHI *back*) : Come, uncle, let's go !

JUKICHI (*trembling with excitement*) : Yes, we had better go home at once.

[MITSU *and* JUKICHI *leave the house.* YUNEN *remains standing alone, meditating. The sun is just setting. Presently* KWAYO, YUNEN'S *pupil, enters.*

KWAYO : Here I am. (YUNEN *does not reply.*) Professor, that man who just left here—wasn't it Mr. Yasuda from Matsudo ?

YUNEN : Yes, it was.

KWAYO : Then the girl with him was Mitsu ? No wonder she reminded me of your former wife ! I am sorry I didn't get to speak with her. What were they doing here, professor ?

YUNEN : He wanted me to take Mitsu back. His wife is sick and he is having a hard time of it.

KWAYO : And did you refuse ?

YUNEN : Yes ; I don't want to do it.

KWAYO : I am sorry. . . .

YUNEN : For me ?

KWAYO : Now you are joking. (*He takes some money from his pocket.*) They paid me—both of them.

YUNEN : How much from Kobun-do ?

KWAYO : Seventy yen, making one hundred and ten altogether.

YUNEN : Fine ! I thought they never would pay, the damned rascals ! You take out the twenty yen I borrowed from you the other day, and let me have fifty. Give the rest to Kuni.

KWAYO : Very well. (*He hands fifty yen to* YUNEN.) When your wife was alive you never gave her any money ; you spent it all on yourself. You certainly have changed lately—it must be because you are growing old.

YUNEN : No ; it's not that. It's because I am in love with this woman.

KWAYO : And you didn't love your wife ?

YUNEN : No ; she was my wife. This woman is my model, and my mistress. Where is there a man who loves his wife and does not love his mistress ? Of course I am not speaking of the men who don't know the difference between the two. And there is a great deal of difference. A wife must be mistreated, if a man is to be content with her ; a mistress . . .

[KUNI *comes downstairs.*

KUNI : Well, Kwayo, are you here ?

KWAYO : Yes ; here I am.

KUNI : You must have come just as our guests left. I noticed the change in voices, and wondered how it could have happened so suddenly. I was lying down, taking a little nap.

KWAYO : Here is some money for you. . . .

KUNI : Oh, did they pay up ? You may as well keep it—it's all the same.

[YUNEN *turns away.*

KWAYO : If I keep it I shall be sure to spend it. (*He hands her the money.*)

KUNI (*taking the money and putting it in her bosom*) : Well, professor, I'll wager you are going out, now that you have some money.

YUNEN : Hm—m !

KUNI : If you do go out, I suggest that first of all you go to the barber. It has been all of two months since you had your hair trimmed.

YUNEN : Hm-m !

KUNI : And after that to the baths.* It has been three weeks since you bathed—there is no one else on earth like you !

YUNEN : Hm—m ! Yes, I had better. I will. (*He starts out.*)

KUNI : Are you going now ? (*She gets a towel for him.*) Where's your soap ?

* In Japanese cities very few houses have facilities for bathing. The residents patronize public baths, carrying with them their own soap and towels.

YUNEN : I don't need any soap.

KUNI : But you are filthy ! If you took a bath every day it would be different.

YUNEN : No ; I don't want any.

[*He goes out.* KUNI *accompanies him as far as the porch, then returns.*

KUNI : Kwayo, you were very late.

KWAYO : Late for what ?

KUNI : Late in getting back from your errand.

KWAYO : Why, I went and came like a flash !

KUNI : You were late, just the same. (*A pause.*) I am sure the professor will not come back to-night. It isn't in his nature to stay home so long as he has any money.

KWAYO : He has changed, though, lately. He is not as young as he used to be.

KUNI : I have heard he used to treat his wife very cruelly.

KWAYO : Yes, she was always covered with bruises. But she was such a patient creature ! And a good woman too. She was certainly kind to me. (*Touched by the reminiscence.*) I used to feel very sorry for her.

KUNI : I believe you were in love with her !

KWAYO : Don't be silly ! She was fifteen years older than I.

KUNI : You can't always be sure that age will make any difference. (*She pinches him playfully.*) You heartless wretch !

KWAYO : Ouch ! Don't ! (*He rises.*) Well, I must get busy. I have to finish my painting of Engyoku-daisha.

KUNI : It has been five days since we were alone together, and now you are going to desert me for your stupid work !

KWAYO : But I have to get this done. That newspaper work is keeping me on the run.

KUNI : How cruel you are ! (*Pulling him down beside her.*) I won't let you work !

KWAYO (*laughing in an embarrassed way*) : Don't get rough. I'm fragile ! Handle with care !

KUNI : It was after one o'clock when you came home night before last. Where had you been ?

KWAYO : At the home of a friend.

KUNI : Whereabout ?

KWAYO : In the Kanda district.

KUNI : Who lives there that you know ?

KWAYO : Mr. Komuro. He is one of the editors of the *Bunyosha.*

KUNI : I never heard you mention his name before. You don't often go to see him, do you ?

KWAYO : No ; this was the first time.

KUNI : And you stayed so late—long after midnight ?

KWAYO : Yes. They had a big supper, and . . .

KUNI (*sharply*) : You're lying !

KWAYO : What do you mean ?

KUNI : You think I don't know anything ? (*She takes a letter from her bosom.*) This letter is in large handwriting, but nevertheless it is from a woman.

KWAYO : Let me see it.

KUNI : Will you read it here with me ? If you will, you may have it.

KWAYO : Let me see it, anyway. Who is it from ?

KUNI : It is signed with an assumed name, of course.

KWAYO (*snatching the letter from her quickly*) : Why, this is nothing ; it is from my friend in Ushigomi. His name is Matsu-uchi, and he is an oil-painter.

KUNI : Then we may as well read what is inside.

KWAYO : No ; I can hardly allow that. You never can tell what may be in a letter, even . . .

KUNI : You are clever, but I am sure it is a love-letter. You don't dare to read it with me !

KWAYO : Nonsense ! (*Looking at the seal.*) Why, you have opened it ! It wouldn't look like that if you hadn't. (KUNI *does not reply.*) You had no business opening it ; here it is marked " personal."

KUNI : Shouldn't I have opened it ?

KWAYO : Before I had read it ? Certainly not !—Not even you. (KUNI *begins to weep.*) What is this ? You're crying. Oh well, there's no need of that.

KUNI : You are so unkind ! You don't seem to realise that I am only staying in this house because of you. . . . (*She continues to sob.*)

KWAYO (*laughing*) : I do understand ; but it is ridiculous for you to cry.

KUNI (*wiping her tears away*) : It is becoming unbearable !

KWAYO : Well, then, forget it.

KUNI : What ! You say that with your own lips ?

KWAYO : Yes, with these lips.

KUNI : These . . . ? (*She touches his lips with her hand.*) You beast !

[*A noise is heard outside the door. The two move apart.* YUNEN *enters, looking hurt and very angry.*

Why . . . why . . . Professor ! (YUNEN *looks from one to the other without speaking.* KUNI *continues in a dissembling manner.*) What about your bath ? Was the bath-house closed ? I thought it closed only on the twentieth. (YUNEN *remains gazing fixedly at them.*) What is the matter with you ? (*She forces a laugh.*) You look so funny !

[YUNEN *keeps up his obstinate silence.* KWAYO *starts upstairs.*

YUNEN : Wait !

KWAYO (*stopping and replying involuntarily*) : What ?

[YUNEN *leaps at him and strikes him two or three blows.* KWAYO *pushes him away roughly.* YUNEN *falls back for a moment, then rushes at* KWAYO *again, seizing him by the throat.* KWAYO *holds* YUNEN'S *arms.*

What does this mean ?

YUNEN : I'll show you what I mean—you . . . !

KUNI (*to* YUNEN) : What's the matter ? Stop this !

[YUNEN *throws* KWAYO *down and strikes him. They struggle.*

Don't ! Don't ! You are hurting him ! Kwayo, run away !

[YUNEN *seizes an earthen bowl and strikes* KWAYO *in the face with it. The bowl crashes to pieces, and* KWAYO'S *face*

bleeds. KUNI *throws her arms about* YUNEN *in an effort to restrain him.*

YUNEN (*to* KWAYO) : You cur !

KUNI : Kwayo, get outside !

YUNEN (*to* KUNI) : Let go of me !

[KWAYO *glares at* YUNEN.

KUNI (*to* YUNEN) : What is the matter with you ? There must be some misunderstanding.

YUNEN : A misunderstanding, eh ? You mean, a mistake. Traitor !

KUNI : Shame on you for being jealous ! You should know better at your age ! (YUNEN *slaps her face. She cries out.*) How dare you ! Fool !

YUNEN : I have been a fool too long. (*He grasps her by the hair and forces her to the floor.*) You have been deceiving me. I have suspected it for a long time, and I have been waiting to prove it with my own eyes. You vipers !

KUNI : What are you talking about ? Why shouldn't he be my lover if I love him ?

[YUNEN *starts after* KWAYO *again.* KUNI *snatches a red-hot iron rod from the charcoal stove and threatens* YUNEN *with it.*

If you so much as lay a finger on him . . . !

YUNEN (*to* KWAYO) : Get out ! Get out of this house at once !

KWAYO : Huh ! (*He laughs sarcastically and walks out of the house.*)

YUNEN : Do you mean to say that you would raise your hand against me ?

KUNI : Of course I would !

YUNEN : Harlot ! (*He throws her on the floor and takes the hot iron away from her ; then he picks up some chain that lies nearby, and pinning her down with his knee, binds her hand and foot.*) Now ! This time I will bind you in earnest !

KUNI : Let me alone, you brute !

[YUNEN *carries her into the garden and chains her to an oak tree.*

Very well ! Do what you please with me ! I never have loved you, you old monkey ! I lived with you so I could be near Kwayo. You never knew that—you blockhead !

YUNEN (*getting towels and gagging her*) : Now ! Talk if you can ! It serves you right ! This is just what you need. I realise now how much I love you. I bind you thus because I love you. You should thank me for it. Hm—m ! . . . When you used to pose for me in chains, you never got the right mood ; now you have got it. You look absolutely right, in spite of the fact that you are a harlot. Hm—m ! . . . You hair is falling loose, just as I want it. (*He stands looking at her appraisingly.*) Wait ! I want more hair falling this way. (*He crosses to her and pulls her hair more over her face.*) There ! That is exactly right. And I want a little blood on your cheek. Red ink won't do either. (*He takes a small knife and cuts her cheek slightly.*) Did it hurt ? (*The blood flows from the wound.*) That's splendid ! (*He grows wildly enthusiastic as he gazes upon her.*) I have made thousands of sketches of women in chains, but I have never had such a good model as you are now ! I made you my mistress, and you deceived me—but I am the winner. You never can tell what will bring luck to a man. (*He thinks deeply.*) But you are vipers ! Despicable vipers ! You deceived me ! (*He mutters as if to himself.*) My former wife committed adultery with my teacher, but I pretended to know nothing of it. I didn't say a word about it. . . . There is no other way to keep a woman except to bind her. She never hesitates to keep a man in hot water. . . . Ah ! . . . I feel as if I were going to faint ! (*He staggers.*) What shall I do with her now ? . . . Yes ! Burn her alive ! (*To* KUNI.) I am going to start a fire under you. (KUNI *struggles with fear.* YUNEN *laughs coldly.*) You are moaning, eh ? Serves you right ! Don't you want me to do it ? (KUNI *grows quiet.*) Shall I start the fire ? (*She remains motionless. Decisively.*) Very well, then, I will burn you. (*He goes to the corner of the garden and brings some straw, sacks and some pieces of brushwood, which he places under* KUNI. *She does not move.*) Now I am going to burn you alive ! (*He laughs like a madman.*) Ha, ha, ha !

[*It is growing dark. The wind blows some leaves down*

from the trees. KWAYO *appears in the corner of the garden.*

Now then, stay quiet—just as you are ! I am going to start the fire. This painting will be my masterpiece. (*He rises.*) Your figure shall be immortal ! Therefore, you must lie still, thinking of the glory. . . .

[KWAYO *rushes upon* YUNEN *and strikes him.* YUNEN *falls without uttering a word.*

CURTAIN.

ST. PETER'S COLLEGE LIBRARY
3 6980 00163 4964

Iwasaki, Yozan T
New plays from Japan

38501

O'Toole Library
Withdrawn

PL 887 .I77
Iwasaki, Yozan T
New plays from Japan